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Gilpin

SERMONS

PREACHED TO A

COUNTRY CONGREGATION:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED, A FEW

Hints for Sermons;

INTENDED CHIEFLY FOR THE USE OF THE YOUNGER CLERGY.

By WILLIAM GILPIN, M.A.
PREBENDARY OF SALISBURY, AND VICAR OF BOLDRE, IN NEW FOREST.

VOL. III.

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1895

TO

JOHN HILEY ADDINGTON, Esq.

JOINT PAYMASTER-GENERAL OF HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES.

MY DEAR SIR, *Vicar's-Hill, Jan.* 8, 1803.

IT is a pleaſure to me, that theſe little publications afford me an opportunity of giving a teſtimony of my affection to ſome of my early friends, whoſe conduct in life has always given me ſo much real ſatisfaction. I think you are the next *in order of ſeniority*, with whoſe name I wiſh mine to be united. I revert to this old mode of diſtinction, that I may not give offence, if ſuch a trifle can give offence, to others, whoſe characters I have long very greatly eſteemed. With various branches of your family I have had much intimate acquaintance, if I may not call it friendſhip; and have ſeen, in one or other of them, all the duties of private life very happily fulfilled.

It has been the impudent boaſt of profligacy, that *private vices are public benefits*. I ſhould

not think the welfare of my country ran much riſk under the influence of an oppoſite maxim. —I dare even venture to conceive, the influence of private virtues will ſtill be more beneficial, the more they are exalted into public— Nay, I own, my dear Sir, I am ſuperſtitious enough to believe, a religious prince, and a religious miniſtry, are, even in a political light, among the greateſt bleſſings of a nation. Profligacy, with all its *boaſted benefits*, I hope never to ſee connected with any department of the public. It makes a plain man ſhudder to hear patriots bawling for the public good, while every action of their lives in odious contraſt, proclaim them deteſted villains.

In the mean time, may you and I conſider the virtues of a private life, as a pledge for thoſe of a public. For myſelf I am happy that all my friends in public life have given this pledge to their country.

Warmed with theſe ſentiments, I beg you, my dear Sir, to believe me, with the greateſt ſincerity and eſteem,

Your truly affectionate friend and ſervant,

WILL. GILPIN.

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SER-

As the angel ſpake, the light around them was ſuddenly filled with a multitude of the heavenly hoſt, who joined their voices in one triumphant ſong, *Glory to God in the higheſt; and on earth, peace, good-will to men.*

Theſe words ſhall be the ſubject of the following diſcourſe. But firſt I ſhould wiſh you to obſerve, from the circumſtances juſt related, how little all worldly diſtinctions appear in the ſight of God. The fooliſh world admires riches and honours: but you ſee, God eſtimates things by other meaſures. He did not ſend his heavenly meſſengers to tell theſe glad tidings to the princes, and great men of the earth: but he ſent them to a humble company of pious ſhepherds; ſhewing, that he regards the good diſpoſition, not the ſtation in life—and that, wherever this is found, however humble the condition, there alſo is found the true favourite of God.

Cloath yourſelves therefore with the holy diſpoſitions of theſe ſhepherds—their piety, and love for truth, their innocence of manners, and attention to the holy meſſages of God, and then conceive the ſame joyful tidings brought to you, which were brought to them. *Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord. Glory therefore*

to

to God in the higheſt; and on earth, peace, good-will to man.

Theſe words let me now explain. The Meſſiah's coming, you ſee, is here repreſented, as producing, *the glory of God; and peace and good-will among men*—that is, its firſt object was to fit us for heaven—its next to make us happy in our paſſage to it.

The *glory of God* is an expreſſion taken from human things, as all our expreſſions muſt be taken, that relate to God. We can only explain ſuch things as we do not know, by comparing them with things we do know. Literally ſpeaking, it is impoſſible that any thing we can do, can advance the glory of God: but God is pleaſed to conſider thoſe things as his glory, which advance the true glory of mankind—their pious and religious lives. And thus in our church-ſervice, we properly pray, *that we may live godly, righteous, and ſober lives, to the glory of God's holy name.*

Now the Chriſtian religion alone inſtructs us how to give glory to God. You have often heard in what manner the glory of God was debaſed in heathen times, by the worſhip of ſtocks and ſtones. All that glory, which was due to *God in the higheſt,*

was attributed to devils, or to the ſpirits of dead men.

The Chriſtian religion reformed this great corruption; and drew men, as St. Paul tells the Athenians, from the worſhip of the *unknown God*, to the worſhip of that God, *who made heaven and earth*.

We who have been bred up from our infancy in the knowledge of God, are not aware how we gained this knowledge. As we acquired it imperceptibly from our childhood, it may appear to us, as if it had been born with us. But when we conſider the blind ſtate of the heathen world, we can give no reaſon, why we ſhould not be as blind as they were—except our having been favoured with the light of the Goſpel. We may take it for granted therefore, that all our religious knowledge proceeds from that ſource. By it we are informed, that the power, and wiſdom, and goodneſs of God are infinite—that God is kind to us, beyond what we can conceive—that every thing that happens to us, though diſagreeable at preſent, is intended for our good; and that it will certainly produce our good, whatever it is, if we make a proper uſe of it.

It

It is the Goſpel alſo that inſtructs us to pray to God in a manner the moſt agreeable to him. It allows us to pray for our temporal wants; but within proper bounds, and with entire ſubmiſſion to the will of God. In ſpiritual things it leaves us more at large—it inſtructs us to adore the infinite perfections of God, and to praiſe him for all his goodneſs both temporal and ſpiritual; eſpecially for that great inſtance of it in graciouſly ſhewing us a method of being reſtored, through Chriſt, to that happineſs, which Adam, and in him all his poſterity, had loſt. It inſtructs us alſo to pray for the virtues of a Chriſtian life, charity, humility, temperance, faith, piety, as the greateſt ornaments of the Chriſtian profeſſion; and laſtly, to acknowledge our own unworthineſs; to pray for the aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit, and for the forgiveneſs of our ſins, through the atonement of our bleſſed Saviour. In ſhort, the Chriſtian religion inſtructs us to live up to our prayers; to form our lives upon them; and to be in our *actions* the ſame pious, humble, charitable Chriſtians, that we wiſh to appear before God in our *prayers*.

It is the incenſe of theſe holy prayers—it is the incenſe of theſe holy lives, which the Goſpel hath

taught us to direct to heaven; and which God is graciouſly pleaſed to call, *giving glory to him in the higheſt.*

Let us next examine the *ſecond* part of the text, and ſee how the Chriſtian religion promotes *peace, and good-will among men.* Now this it does in ſeveral ways.

In the firſt place, it promotes internal peace. The mind of man is poſſeſſed by paſſions of various kinds. Some of them make it calm and eaſy; others boiſterous and unhappy. He, whoſe mind is boiling over with rage, or rankling with envy, cannot feel that peace, which he does when his mind is compoſed. Theſe miſchievous paſſions are not only painful in themſelves; but they draw his attention from every purſuit that is valuable.—Now it is the buſineſs of religion to remove theſe reſtleſs paſſions; and to fill the mind with ſuch ſoothing affections, as throw a kind of ſunſhine on all our other enjoyments.

Then again, with regard to thoſe great points—the immortality of the ſoul—the forgiveneſs of ſin—and a future ſtate of happineſs—the mind muſt ſurely be more at peace, when it is aſcertained of the

the truth of theſe things, than when it is labouring in a ſtate of uncertainty.

We, to whom theſe bleſſed notices have been familiar from our childhood, cannot have a juſt idea of the ſtate of a ſerious mind, haraſſed with miſconceptions on theſe grand ſubjects. Amidſt all this uncertainty, no doubt the mercy of God through Chriſt, is extended to all good men, though they had no opportunities of knowing the Goſpel. But our great happineſs conſiſts in being aſſured of theſe things. This is that hope, that ſecurity, which the pious Chriſtian enjoys; and which, above all other things, makes good to him the holy promiſe in the text, *of peace.*

But the Goſpel hath not only its effect in producing peace in our own minds, it hath the ſame good effect in producing peace among each other. All the quarrels between man and man—between nation and nation, ariſe entirely from ſome wrong turn of mind—from envy, malice, avarice, jealouſy, ambition, or ſome other bad paſſion, which it is the very buſineſs of religion to reſtrain. If no man bore malice, or revenge, againſt his neighbour; or coveted his neighbour's goods; or ſlandered him; or provoked him by unbridled paſſions; or was guilty of unjuſt actions, (all which things

oppoſe Chriſtianity in the moſt direct manner,) *peace, and good-will* among mankind would immediately, and univerſally take place. In ſhort, we cannot injure the peace of each other, without firſt injuring the precepts of our religion.

Then again, among nations, the ſame peace and happineſs would exiſt, as between man and man, if they would liſten to the precepts of the Goſpel. The ſame divine laws which forbid anger, malice, and envy, forbid alſo ambition—a thirſt after power, and competitions in trade, which lead to every national miſchief: unleſs exalting or enriching a few individuals, at the expence of thouſands, may be reckoned among the bleſſings of a nation.

But now, ſays the objector, when we look abroad in the world, we ſee but very little of thoſe bleſſed effects, which the Goſpel was intended to produce.—We ſee little of men's *giving glory to God in the higheſt;* but a great deal of curſing and ſwearing by his name; and of profaning it with every act of irreverence.—We ſee little of *giving glory* to God in his temple; but much profanation of his Sabbath, and neglect of all the ordinances which he hath appointed.

Then

Then again, as to *peace, and good-will among men*, we hear little more of it now, than we did before the days of Chriſtianity. We ſee nations equally diſpoſed to quarrel and fight; people every where to cheat and deceive; to plunder and deſtroy; in ſhort, to be as guilty of every kind of ill-neighbourhood, as they could have been in the worſt of times. So that, in fact, ſays the objector, a religion, that came into the world with a hymn of triumph, marking ſo ſtrongly its intention, *Glory to God in the higheſt; and on earth, peace, good-will to men*, does not in any degree, ſeem to have anſwered the gracious purpoſes, for which it was intended.

That is falſe. Much general reformation, and happineſs, in various ways, hath been introduced into the world by the Goſpel, both among individuals, and among nations.—But even on a ſuppoſition it had been otherwiſe, it proves nothing againſt the good effects of Chriſtianity, if it were properly obeyed. It only proves that, notwithſtanding the purity of the Goſpel, and its gracious intention of making mankind religious and happy, there are numbers who will not be made religious and

and happy by it. But what could God Almighty do more for man; conſiſtently with leaving him at liberty to act freely? He could only give him a rule to walk by, and reaſon to enforce that rule; unleſs he had changed his nature; and, by giving him a new religion, had wrought a ſtanding miracle to force his obedience to it. So that, of courſe, the world will always be divided into two ſorts of people—ſuch as are deaf to all the calls of religion; and ſuch as live up to its rules. Among theſe latter only are to be found thoſe who feel the happineſs of living under Goſpel-laws. It would be a wonderful thing indeed, if thoſe ſhould profit by them, who never trouble their heads about them. The patient, who rejects the medicine, muſt not hope to remove the diſeaſe. Our Saviour himſelf, you remember, propheſied, in the parable of the ſower, of the different reception which his Goſpel ſhould meet with among different men. Some ſeed, he tells you, would fall among thorns, and be choaked—others on beaten ground, and be picked up—but that ſtill there would be ſome which would fall on good ground, and bring forth fruit in abundance.

The Chriſtian religion therefore is not meant to work by force, or like a charm, on the minds of men,

men. If it did, there could be no goodneſs in the obſervance of it: but it is intended mercifully to guide thoſe to happineſs, who will liſten to its gracious voice. So that when we look into the world, and wiſh to ſee the effects of religion, we muſt look for it only among real Chriſtians—among thoſe who truly live up to its laws—and not among thoſe who happen to live in a Chriſtian country; and are Chriſtians only in name.

May God of his infinite mercy grant, that all we who enjoy the benefit of its divine precepts may liſten to them; and, as far as we can, promote *the glory of God in the higheſt, and peace and good-will among men*, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord!

SERMON II.

2 TIM. ii. 19.

LET EVERY ONE THAT NAMETH THE NAME OF CHRIST, DEPART FROM INIQUITY.

THE character of a good Chriſtian may with many people be deſirable, merely as it implies an honeſt man. It is not real Chriſtianity they value. All they wiſh is to be conſidered as men of a fair appearance in public—as men with whom the world may deal with confidence.

Now when religion ſerves merely an appearance, it is what our bleſſed Saviour ſo aptly calls the *cloke of ſin.** It conceals under it whatever we wiſh to conceal. The knavery of our hearts—our bad deſigns—our purpoſes of revenge—our lewd

* John, xv. 22.

intentions—

intentions are all concealed, when the man has gotten his religious cloke on. He paſſes for a good Chriſtian; and all is well.

I hope I need not tell any of *you*, there is no religion in all this. Such a man may be Chriſtian enough to ſave appearances—but certainly not enough to ſave his ſoul. The text gives us another notion of being Chriſtians.—Let us hear it once more. *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity.* Let him not reſt in the form of religion: but let him endeavour after the ſpirit of it; let his heart, his lips, and his actions all agree.

In the following diſcourſe I ſhall enlarge upon the apoſtle's advice; and urge ſeveral motives to perſuade thoſe, who *call themſelves Chriſtians*, to anſwer their profeſſion.

In the firſt place, let us conſider how diſreputable it is to act unſuitably to our profeſſion. Even in common matters—in the buſineſs of this world—it is diſgraceful. He who profeſſes an art, or calling, and appears totally ignorant of it, is juſtly thought contemptible.—You know how diſcreditable it is for a man to take a farm, for in-

ſtance, when he knows not how to manage it. He ſows wheat where he ſhould ſow barley. His grounds are ill prepared for either; and his neighbours ſee him carrying into his barn a plentiful crop of weeds, intermixed with his corn. They laugh at his ignorance. He feels it, and is aſhamed.

Now, if our feelings were as ſtrong in matters of religion as they are in the matters of this world (and it is a grievous thing, and much to be lamented, they are not), we ſhould think it as contemptible for a Chriſtian to fall ſhort of *his* profeſſion, as for a man in any kind of buſineſs to be ignorant of that buſineſs. A Chriſtian's proper diſtinction is a holy life. He does not pretend to have more genius, or more learning, than a Turk or a heathen; but he profeſſes to be more chaſte—more ſober—more juſt—more charitable—more pious, and more reſigned. And if he fail in theſe, he deſerts the art he ſhould live by. He is a mere pretender—plainly unſkilled in his proper profeſſion.

To the ſcandal an unchriſtian life brings on ourſelves, let us add the ſcandal it brings on religion. Many, who are inclined to undervalue religion, found an argument on its having ſo little effect

effect on the lives of Chriſtians. And indeed the bad lives of Chriſtians, though certainly no argument againſt Chriſtianity, form one of the moſt obvious objections to it. The pretended Chriſtian, were it on this account only, is the greateſt enemy to religion. For it will ever be uppermoſt in the minds of thoſe who wiſh it ill—"that if the Goſpel were really true, it would ſurely have a better effect on the lives of ſuch as pretend to believe it: but if there were neither a heaven to be hoped, nor a hell to be feared, how could many Chriſtians live worſe than they do!"

Unſcriptural opinions, my brethren, often give offence; and when they are really unſcriptural, they are certainly offenſive. But he who merely holds a wrong opinion, if his life be correct, is an innocent member of Chriſt's church, in compariſon with him, whoſe life is ſcandalous. His opinions may be right, though we think them wrong. It is not an infallible rule, that things are always wrong, becauſe we think them ſo. Be they however right or wrong, few people can judge of opinions. But every body can judge of a bad life. Every body can ſee the injury which that does to religion. A perſecuting infidel is indeed not ſo great an enemy to Chriſtianity as a wicked Chriſtian. Chriſtianity

defied

defied the malice of its open enemies; but it is greatly injured by the wickedneſs of its falſe friends: and it were better that they who cannot bring themſelves to live like Chriſtians, ſhould lay aſide their profeſſion—ſhould drop the name of *Chriſtians*, than continue a name which, without the reality, injures both themſelves and others.

Let me preſs the matter of hypocriſy a little more. Every one who makes religion a pretence to gain an advantage, is in fact, a knave. In a Chriſtian country the name of a Chriſtian is of ſervice to a man. He enjoys many advantages by it, which he could not enjoy without it. But if he profeſs it without living up to the rules of his profeſſion, he certainly enjoys a benefit under a falſe pretence; and is a knave under the garb of a hypocrite.

But you ſay, the man is not a hypocrite; he is an open and avowed ſinner.

Very likely: but ſtill he profeſſes himſelf a Chriſtian. He would take the ſacrament, I ſuppoſe, to enable him to hold a good place: or he would take an oath to enable him to make a good bargain.—And is not this an hypocritical impoſition? Does not he, who adminiſters the oath, reſt his ſecurity upon the oath? But you ſee, he

is

is deceived. The oath is no ſecurity. His only ſecurity is the law againſt perjury.

The laſt miſchief I ſhall mention ariſing from living contrary to our profeſſion, is that of ſetting a bad example. We are ſurely anſwerable for the example we ſet. Great ſtreſs is laid upon example in various parts of Scripture. *Let your light ſhine before men*, ſays our Saviour. *I have given you an example, that you ſhould do as I have done unto you.—Chriſt left us an example*, ſays St. Peter, *that we ſhould follow his ſteps;*—theſe, and an hundred other paſſages ſhew, what ſtreſs the Scriptures lay upon example.

And yet ſome people will cry, Our wickedneſs hurts only ourſelves.

You are miſtaken, my friends: the hurt you do yourſelves is not half the guilt, that attends your bad example. If they, who are yet innocent, did not ſee the wickedneſs of others, they durſt not break out in the manner they do. Shame would keep them, at leaſt, within the bounds of decency. If it were not for the old ſinner, for inſtance, whoſe daily practice it is to curſe and ſwear, would the young ſinner, think you, venture ſō eaſily on an oath? No: he could not frame his mouth to it. He would dread his neighbours

hearing it. The very ſound of an oath in his own ears would ſtartle him. But the example of the old ſinner draws him in. He hears oaths continually: and when an oath is made familiar, it becomes common language.

Thus it is alſo in ſabbath-breaking. There were times, in the days of our forefathers, when people went as regularly to church, as they now go to market—when a man could not abſent himſelf, without being enquired after, as we enquire after a ſick perſon. A man could not then follow his pleaſures on a Sunday, and leave the church behind him: it would give offence to his neighbours: he durſt not do it. But now he ſees the ſabbath ſo univerſally broken, that he is under no ſuch difficulty: he finds himſelf in a crowd: the example of the old ſinner defends him.—And as it is in ſwearing, and ſabbath-breaking; ſo is it in drinking, gaming, and every other inſtance of wickedneſs, which men now commit openly. The old ſinner leads the young ſinner into it by his example.—And do theſe wretches, think you, who miſlead others, injure only themſelves? In the great day of accounts, when you and I ſhall ſtand anſwerable for our deeds, God have mercy on thoſe who corrupt others by their example! Their

ſins

ſins make only one wicked perſon: their *example* makes thouſands.

Am I too ſevere? Let me bring the matter home to your own feelings. Suppoſe any of you had a ſon, whom you ſhould ſee enticed, and led away to his ruin by wicked companions—ſuppoſe they ſhould teach him by their example to drink and game, and ſpend your ſubſtance in extravagance—what would you ſay of the perſons who had thus diſtreſſed you, and ruined your ſon? Would you gently ſay, they had injured only themſelves? or would you not rather ſay, that in your own eſtimation, they could not have done you a greater injury?—And think you not, that our heavenly Father will conſider all wicked corrupters in the ſame light? and that his all-pure eye will ſee the guilt of corrupting innocence as forcibly as any earthly father can do? No doubt, he will; and call the offender to a very ſevere account.

Conſidering then all theſe things, let me once more exhort every one of you, my brethren, *who nameth the name of Chriſt, to depart from iniquity.* With what face can we continue in our ſins—our known

and wilful ſins, and profeſs ſeriouſly we believe a religion, that has, in the plaineſt manner, denounced damnation upon ſuch ſins?—Do you not believe it?—Then indeed no more is to be ſaid. But if you do believe it, and have faith in that Saviour, who threatens it, you ſee how inconſiſtently you act.—You fear the laws of the land; and I will tell you why you fear them. You have *faith* in them. You believe they will execute what they threaten. You believe they will puniſh wicked actions, when diſcovered: and therefore you do wicked actions as privately as you can.—But if you had the ſame faith in the Goſpel, as in the laws of the land, you would be equally afraid of committing a wicked action even in thought. Your actions, you may depend upon it, will always be guided by your faith. Would you know what a man believes; attend to what he *does*, not to what he *ſays*. The pretended Chriſtian, who leads a bad life, is much more an infidel — a downright diſbeliever—than he, who, though in words he deny the Goſpel, leads a moral life.

Shew then your faith by your practice. If you call yourſelves Chriſtians, live like Chriſtians. Get the better of your ſinful habits. Let the fear of God

God purify your thoughts. Let the faith of Chriſt rule in your hearts. Shew it by its fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thiſtles? Be juſt, and charitable to your neighbour. Do to others, as you would have them do to you.—Let us do theſe things, and then let us call ourſelves Chriſtians: evermore joining, both in heart, and actions, in that expreſſive prayer of our Church—that *all, who profeſs, and call themſelves Chriſtians, may be led into the way of truth; and hold the faith in unity of ſpirit—in the bond of peace—and in righteouſneſs of life.*

SERMON III.

MAT. xvi. 26.

WHAT IS A MAN PROFITED, IF HE SHALL GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD, AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL?

IF you ſhould ſee a man placed in ſome dangerous ſituation—on the edge of a precipice, for inſtance; while the ground was crumbling away under his feet—and yet totally unconcerned, you would think no name but that of madneſs could belong to him. It is not often however that we ſee men running theſe ſurpriſing riſks in *worldly* affairs. Danger is commonly an alarming circumſtance; and, in general, people are cautious enough in avoiding it.

But there is another kind of danger ſtill greater, into which we are all apt to run, without the leaſt apprehenſion—that of deſtroying—not our lives in this world; but our ſouls in the next.

How

How is it then, while we are thus prudent in worldly matters, that we are continually neglecting things of ſo much greater importance?—that we are, on all occaſions ſhewing our care for a life that periſhes, and pay ſo little attention to a life which is to laſt for ever?

Should you be aſked, whether you would be at more expence and labour in improving an eſtate, of which you had only a very ſhort leaſe; or of one, which you might poſſeſs as long as you lived; you would think the queſtion ſcarce deſerving an anſwer. Yet your ſouls, and your bodies, you well know, bear the ſame relation to each other, that theſe two different kinds of poſſeſſion do? Theſe bodies, you know, are only leaſes, which muſt quickly expire: your ſouls, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, are tenures for life.

We ſhould be ſurprized to be aſked ſeriouſly, whether we believed we had ſouls to be ſaved?—And yet if we had full faith in the article—if we were *thoroughly convinced* that our ſouls can never die, but muſt live for ever, either in a ſtate of happineſs or of miſery; and that this ſtate, through God's mercy in Chriſt, depends entirely on ourſelves, we could not well, one ſhould think, be ſo negligent about them.

Let me then endeavour, *firſt*, to give you a view of the *danger* of a worldly life; and *ſecondly*, to ſhew you wherein the *care* of your ſouls conſiſts.

Firſt then, if this world and the next were on equal terms—if they could diſplay their ſeveral offers with equal force—there could be no competition. This world might diſplay its riches, its honours, and its pleaſures, under all their gaudy forms: but the glories of eternity, like the ſun ſhining in his ſtrength, would dazzle and obſcure them. The wiſdom of Providence however hath thrown a veil over the future. We are here in a ſtate of trial. The glories of the next world are therefore purpoſely hid. We are required to walk by *faith*, not by *ſight*. But as *ſight* is generally more acute than *faith*, the things of this world have the advantage. They are *ſeen*; the others, at beſt, only *believed*.

In this advantage then lies the danger of a *worldly life*. In general it carries away the beſt part of our attention. In a degree we may fix our attention both on this life, and on the next: but the queſtion before us is, On which ought we *chiefly* to fix it? On both we cannot fix it in an equal degree.

If

If you ſhould be aſked, why the ſame thing cannot, at the ſame time, be round and ſquare, you would have a ready anſwer. Theſe two forms are oppoſite in their nature; and it is abſurd to ſuppoſe, that things oppoſite in their nature can agree.

Juſt as oppoſite in their nature are the things of this world, and the things of the next. They can never be brought to an agreement. One muſt have the ſuperiority. You cannot fix an equal degree of attention on both. If your hearts are ſet on the things of this world, you will make them the *chief* employment of *your thoughts:* you will naturally expect your chief *happineſs* from them. If, on the other hand, your hearts are ſet on the things of the next world, you will make *them* the *chief* employment of your thoughts; and will naturally expect your chief happineſs from *them.*— It is impoſſible therefore to expect your *chief happineſs* from one; and, at the ſame time, your *chief happineſs* from the other! This is juſt the abſurdity of ſuppoſing a ſquare and a circle can agree.

As you ſee then in what the danger of a worldly life conſiſts, you ſhould frequently examine yourſelf on this head. How are your *thoughts* commonly

commonly employed? Are they from morning till evening, working, inventing, contriving, and planning your worldly matters? Do your thoughts of another world *never* interfere? Do you never think of that future ſtate, which undoubtedly awaits you. Or, if the thoughts of theſe things ever enter your minds, are they not immediately joſtled out by ſome more important buſineſs; and never ſuffered to make any laſting impreſſion?

Again, what are your ſchemes of pleaſure? Do the hopes of God's favour—a deſire to conform yourſelf to his will—the mercies of God through Chriſt—and the enjoyment of a future ſtate, form any part of your ideas of happineſs? Do you never ſay ſeriouſly to yourſelf, This world will ſoon be over, let me endeavour to make ſome proviſion for the next?—Or, is the happineſs of this world the only happineſs you have any notion of? When you feel your ſpirits raiſed, or depreſſed, and examine your heart to find out the cauſe of all this joy or depreſſion, is it the world that is always at the bottom of your joys and griefs? Does never a hope glow within you, that you are getting the better of ſome bad habit—that you are fitting yourſelf, more and more, for enjoying the bleſſed company of *juſt men made perfect?*

perfect?—Or are your joys ſtill founded on ſome little worldly expectation—ſome preſent proſpect of pleaſure or advantage; and your diſtreſs, on ſome trifling diſappointment, ſome baffled ſcheme, or little worldly vexation; ſo that it is always the world that lies at your heart, and is the foundation of all your happineſs and miſery?

Thus examining yourſelf, you will ſee your ſituation in the world, and the danger that ariſes from too cloſe a connection with it.

At the ſame time, worldly buſineſs not only agrees with religion, but may indeed make a conſiderable part of it. It is your duty to provide induſtriouſly for your families; and to take a frugal care, that what you get, may anſwer the beſt purpoſes. And if you are honeſt in your dealings; not murmuring at your loſſes, but contented with your ſtation, putting your truſt in God, praiſing him for his mercies, and diligently ſerving him—your induſtry and care will not only be approved by God, but will be conſidered as religion.

How far, however, we may mix the world and religion together, and how far we may engage in one without endangering the other, may be

be better ſeen by conſidering, as I propoſed, ſecondly, in what the care of our ſouls conſiſts.

In general it conſiſts in fitting them properly for the next world.

You find, that to fit yourſelves properly for *this* world, many things are neceſſary. Whatever your profeſſion is, you muſt acquaint yourſelves with thoſe things which relate to it, or you will be very unqualified for it. Some are employed in trade; others in arts; others in tilling the ground; but among all theſe different ways of providing for yourſelves, and your families, you know there is not one, in which you muſt not learn many things, before you can be qualified to get your bread in it.

Now in a manner like this, the care of your ſouls conſiſts in fitting them for that future ſtate, in which they are intended to live. So that whatever the nature of that future world is, you muſt endeavour to make your ſouls conformable to it.

Now thus far of the nature of that future world, we well know, that it is a place wherein *dwelleth righteouſneſs;* and from every part of Scripture

Scripture we are given to underſtand, that nothing but purity and righteouſneſs can enter that holy place. It is plain, therefore, beyond all doubt, that nobody with bad diſpoſitions in his heart, which he does not endeavour to correct, can find his way thither at any rate. The envious man, who wiſhes ill to his neighbour; the revengeful and malicious man, who does ſpiteful actions to his neighbour; the diſhoneſt man, who cheats his neighbour; the hard-hearted man, who never aſſiſts his neighbour; the covetous man, who thinks of nothing, but laying up money; the ſabbath-breaker, who ſpends the Sunday in his diverſions; the drunkard; the lewd perſon; the profane ſwearer; all theſe, and ſinners of all other kinds, in thought, word, and deed; till they have purified their thoughts; till they have thoroughly repented of their ſins, and changed their hearts and lives, can never be qualified to enter the kingdom of God.

Attend ſeriouſly to what the apoſtle St. Paul ſays on this point:—*Know ye not, that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the abuſers of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers,*

revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God.

And here I cannot help mentioning a miſtake, which men are too often inclined to make; and that is, putting one part of their duty for the whole. I have met with this deluſion ſometimes at the death-beds of dying ſinners: "I never "wronged any man," ſome poor expiring perſon will cry; "and therefore, I hope God will ſave "me."

I hope ſo too: but, at the ſame time, we have no authority for believing, that wronging nobody will alone ſave any man. It is a very happy thing, no doubt, when a dying ſinner can ſay, I have wronged no man; and muſt give him great comfort at his latter end: but he muſt not think that wronging no man is all that God requires. There are duties to God, and duties to ourſelves, and duties to our neighbour, and he who leaves theſe duties out of his practice; and contents himſelf with the hopes that his wronging no man is ſufficient, will find himſelf, when he comes to die, I fear, but in an ill-prepared ſtate.

Another dying ſinner will cry, "I have been "conſtant at church—we all have our faults—I "have been my own worſt enemy."

Now this is probably a man who has indulged himſelf in great liberties—has run into great exceſſes—and has drawn upon himſelf diſeaſes, or beggary, or miſchief of ſome kind, by his drunkenneſs and other vices. He ſays, he has been his own worſt enemy; and ſo he probably has: but then, he concludes, that, as he has been his own worſt enemy, and has therefore ſuffered in this world for his ſins, God will ſpare him in the next. This matter being ſettled, there remains ſtill his *going to church*, as a ſort of balance in his favour, which he hopes will carry him to heaven.—I have had reaſon to believe, this is not a very unuſual way of reaſoning among dying ſinners, to make their conſciences eaſy.

It is not our parts, my brethren, to ſet bounds to the divine goodneſs. Theſe dying ſinners muſt be left to the mercy of God.—To you, who are yet in health and ſtrength, I can ſpeak with more freedom. Depend upon it, that all theſe methods of arguing with your ſouls are deceitful. All ſin, either againſt God, your neighbour, or yourſelves, is contrary to that purity of heart, which is agreeable to the nature of a future ſtate of happineſs; and without which we cannot gain an entrance into it. At the ſame time, all ſin, either againſt God,

God, your neighbour, or yourſelves, if you ſincerely repent, and change your heart, and life, will be pardoned through the merits, and blood of Chriſt. But if you truſt in any other doctrine than this, you may depend upon it, (if there is any truth in the Goſpel,) at one time or other, you will find yourſelves deceived.

From what hath been ſaid then you ſee, the care of your ſouls conſiſts in fitting them for a ſtate of future happineſs—and that to this end no forms, no profeſſions, no rites, nor outward obſervances of any kind will avail—nor any halving of your duty, and taking ſuch parts of it as you like; and leaving out the reſt—nor any thing but a plain, uniform, conſiſtent, pious life. This only, through the merits of Chriſt, can ſave you; and make your ſouls happy, when this world is at an end.

This world is gliding paſt us, like the ſhadow of a ſummer's cloud. Our ſouls are yet ſcarce entered into life. It is but a little while before we ſhall all, the ſtrongeſt and healthieſt amongſt us, certainly be convinced that the beſt thing we could have

have done in this world was to prepare our ſouls for a better. Let us then endeavour to judge of things now, as we ſhall all ſhortly judge of them; and let us live now, as after a few days, or years, we ſhall all wiſh we had lived.

Bleſſed be God, our time is yet in our hands. Let us thank God that it is ſo, and make a right uſe of it. Perhaps we have not yet taken all the care of our ſouls, that we ſhould have taken. Let us redouble our pains: let our repentance be ſincere, and let this great point be the wiſdom of our lives—*for what is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?*

SERMON IV.

LUKE, xvi. 8.

THE CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD ARE WISER IN THEIR GENERATION THAN THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

A CERTAIN ſteward, ſaid our Saviour, was accuſed of diſhoneſty; and was required by his Lord to make up his accounts. Being unable, he was on the point of being diſmiſſed. He thought it neceſſary therefore to take ſome ſtep to prevent his ruin. To work, or beg, ſeemed the only expedients now left; but to neither of theſe he was inclined.——After ſome heſitation, he fell at length on this expedient. He called his Lord's debtors together, examined their ſeveral accounts; and from each deducted about one half: giving them to underſtand, that for ſo great a favour he expected their

their kindneſs in the day of adverſity. On the foreſight and ingenuity of this wicked man our Saviour grounds his remark, that the *children of this world are wiſer in their generation than the children of light.*

The doctrine therefore pointed out by our Saviour is, that the *children of light* ought to ſhew the ſame earneſtneſs in their ſpiritual affairs, which the *others* do in their temporal.—I ſhall endeavour therefore, in explaining the parable, to ſhew you, *firſt* in what the wiſdom of the *children of this world* conſiſts; and *ſecondly* how it ſhould be exemplary to us.

In the firſt place, the *children of this world* impreſs upon themſelves ſtrongly the value of *wealth*, which is the great end they have in view, and which immediately governs all their actions.

It is neceſſary for them therefore to make themſelves acquainted with every thing required in the buſineſs they purſue. Thus, for inſtance, before they fully enter into trade, they muſt acquire the art of managing accounts. They muſt be well informed how to balance the difference between pro-

fit and loſs. They muſt be inſtructed alſo in the nature of ſuch commodities as they are chiefly to deal in. Uſeful connections alſo are neceſſary; and a knowledge of the laws and cuſtoms that relate to trade. But above all, habits of induſtry, and application muſt be formed.

Being thus qualified, *the children of this world* begin now to act at large. A prudent foreſight directs all their actions. They weigh their words, as well as actions. Every unwary expreſſion, that hath a tendency to offend their beſt friends, or injure their main purpoſe, is avoided. The very thought is checked, that doth not terminate in ſome uſeful end. Every ſcheme is maturely weighed, and all the conſequences which may attend either the ſucceſs, or the diſappointment of it. In the mean time, they ſubmit to many inconveniences and hardſhips in the preſent, to obtain good in the future. They run the hazard of dangerous voyages; they venture their money in purchaſes; they put it out to intereſt; and ſubmit to all theſe riſks for the proſpect of future advantage. They caſt up their daily gains, and ſum up their yearly accounts, to ſee how the matter ſtands with regard to the whole. In ſhort, they have, what they call,

the *main chance* always in view, and conſider every circumſtance of their lives, only as it tends to promote it.

To this prudent foreſight the *children of this world* add a conſtant vigilance againſt danger. Locks, bolts, and every kind of ſecurity guard their treaſures. All the defences of the law are employed. They eye every man with caution. It is their maxim to conſider every man they deal with, as a diſhoneſt man, that they may always guard againſt fraud. Evening, which ſhuts up the labours of others, gives little repoſe to them. Their midnight viſions are often diſturbed; and the morning riſes to new anxiety.—Among their greateſt enemies they conſider a love of pleaſure. Every temptation of this kind muſt be given up: for a life of pleaſure, and a life of buſineſs, they well know, are inconſiſtent.

Thus the *children of this world* endeavour with indefatigable pains to purſue the plain, beaten path, the broad way, before them, and turn aſide neither to the right hand nor to the left. If they ever do inadvertently make a falſe ſtep, it is immediately corrected by additional care. If they have ſuffered loſs in trade upon any article, no one ſhall ever ſee

them engaged, under the ſame circumſtances, with *that* article again. If any man hath deceived them once, nobody need caution them againſt that man a ſecond time.

The laſt care of the *children of this world* is, after all their labours, to die rich. Though the thoughts of death are not very agreeable to them, yet as they muſt die, it is at leaſt ſome conſolation, if they can leave their coffers full behind them. They have done their work: their great end is finiſhed: their foreſight, their cares, and their anxieties have been ſucceſsful: they have heaped up thouſands upon thouſands, and their only conſolation now is, that their names will be remembered among the wealthieſt.

Such is the wiſdom of *the children of this world.* They propoſe to themſelves, you ſee, one great end, and this they invariably purſue, not only through all the proper means, but in oppoſition to pleaſure, difficulty, and danger. Jeſus therefore commended the unjuſt ſteward, becauſe, *as a child of the world*, he had done wiſely. If his end had been right, he had been a pattern of wiſdom in the purſuit of it.

Let

Let me then now ſhew you, as I propoſed *ſecondly*, in what way his example ſhould be a pattern to us.

We firſt obſerved, that the *children of this world* are impreſſed with a high idea of the excellence of the end they have in view. They think wealth ſuperior to every thing elſe; and, endeavour eagerly to obtain it.—And are the *children of light* as thoroughly convinced of the importance of the end which they purſue? Do you, for inſtance, conſider, (for I hope, my brethren, you would all wiſh to be called the *children of light*,) do you conſider the things of another world as preferable to every thing elſe? Do you conſider religion as the only foundation of your happineſs; and wickedneſs as the only real cauſe of your miſery? Is the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs as much a concern with you, as wealth is with the *children of this world?* I fear it rarely is. You may think yourſelves in earneſt about heaven: I ſuppoſe you all wiſh to get there—upon your own terms at leaſt; but you would do well to conſider the matter a little more attentively; and bring it home to this teſt, which our Saviour has given you, a compariſon with *the children of this world.*

They, you find, take great pains to qualify themſelves properly for the end they purſue. But do you exert the ſame attention? Are you as careful to examine your bibles, as they are to examine their books of accounts? and to inform yourſelves as exactly of the rules of the goſpel, as they are to gain a knowledge of trade?—If you are not, I fear you are not yet ſo wiſe in your generation as *the children of this world.*

Again, have you that prudent foreſight, which the children of this world have? Do you weigh, as they do, the conſequences of your words and actions? Have you the ſame faith in a Redeemer, which they have in their funds and ſecurities? and put your money out to intereſt in charitable actions, with half ſo good a will, as they do theirs in ſchemes of profit? What an example do they ſet you in ſtating and balancing their accounts? If you ſtated your heavenly accounts with as much exactneſs, and took the ſame care to prevent bad habits, which they do to prevent bad debts, you might with ſome aſſurance hope, you were as wiſe in your generation as the *children of this world.*

Again, have you that conſtant vigilance againſt danger, which attends all the ſchemes of the children of this world? Are you as careful to find

out

out a deceit in your hearts, as they are a miſtake in their books? you ſee with what carefulneſs they guard againſt the knaviſh practices of thoſe they deal with: and are you as careful to guard againſt the deluſions of bad company, or your own wicked hearts? Are *you* as anxious to obtain a good conſcience, as they are to get a good ſecurity? If not, I fear you are not yet ſo wiſe in your generation as the *children of this world.*

Again, when you make a falſe ſtep in life, are you as diligent to recover it as the children of this world? Have you that repentance and ſorrow for your ſins, which they have for their miſtakes in buſineſs? And are you as zealous to redeem your time, as they are to retrieve their loſſes? Laſtly, do you wiſh as ardently to die good, as the children of this world to die rich? Are you as deſirous to leave good works behind you, as they are to leave ſtock in trade, and money in bank? If not, you are not yet ſo wiſe in your generation as the *children of this world.*

Let us all then, my brethren, who wiſh to be the *children of light*, copy the example of the *children*

dren of this world with a little more attention. Obſerve—it is not our Saviour's deſign to preach up a total diſregard for the world. Our firſt father, when placed in paradiſe, was ordered to dreſs it, and keep it in order *. Afterwards he was enjoined to till the ground in the ſweat of his brow: and we are told plainly in ſcripture, that *he who does not work has no right to eat.* Diligence and induſtry in our callings are certainly proper. They are both neceſſary for our well-being, and they keep us from idleneſs, which leads to vice. It is our duty to act properly in the ſtation in which God hath placed us; and to practiſe our religion *in* the world, not *out* of it. So that our Saviour never meant we ſhould neglect the affairs of this world; but only that we ſhould conſider them as inferior to thoſe of a better: that while we are occupied in our worldly affairs, we ſhould not ſet our hearts upon them: but in the midſt of buſineſs ſhould conſtantly remember that gracious God, to whoſe goodneſs we are indebted for all we enjoy. The buſineſs of this world, and the buſineſs of religion may very well be carried on together.

* Gen. ii. 15.

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Let us not then, my brethren, toil for the things of this world, and leave the beſt part of our errand in it neglected. How abſurd does that traveller appear, who having ſome great end in view, inſtead of purſuing his journey with alacrity, is carried away by every trifle in his road, till the night comes on, his time is ſpent, and the grand purpoſe of his journey loſt. And yet ſee we not how much more abſurd he is, who grovels upon earth, when he ſhould be directing his eyes to heaven?

Let us not then be put to ſhame by the *children of this world* in purſuing the great end of our everlaſting ſalvation, with leſs attention than they do the trifling affairs of this life. We have a noble end, and purſue it ill. They have a wretched end, but purſue it properly. Let us then ſhew ourſelves as much in earneſt as they are, and conſider ourſelves as much intereſted in a heavenly purſuit, as they are in an earthly one; always remembering as a conſideration of the firſt concern, that the earthly intereſt is temporal, but the heavenly one is eternal.

SERMON V.

MARK, X. 15.

VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, WHOSOEVER SHALL NOT RECEIVE THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS A LITTLE CHILD, HE SHALL NOT ENTER THEREIN.

IT was a cuſtom among the Jews, to preſent their children to holy perſons for their prayers and bleſſing: and the more eminent the perſon was who offered the prayers, it was reaſonably believed, the more beneficial would be the effect.

To this cuſtom the text relates. As our Saviour was inſtructing the people, ſome of his hearers brought their children, and deſired he would lay his hands upon them, and bleſs them.

The diſciples, perhaps, thinking this an unreaſonable interruption, rebuked the parents for their officious zeal. The mild Saviour of the world was more

more gentle. With great humility, and ſweetneſs of temper, he called the parents to him, took the children in his arms, and bleſſed them.—And then, (as, upon every occaſion, he ſought to give mankind ſome uſeful leſſon,) he turned round to the people, and ſpoke in the words of the text: *Verily, I ſay unto you, whoſoever ſhall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he ſhall not enter therein.*

By the *kingdom of God*, (or of *heaven*,) ſo frequently occurring in ſcripture, is moſt commonly meant the Chriſtian religion in its whole comprehenſive ſcheme, both here and hereafter. When our Saviour therefore tells us, that no man ſhall enter *the kingdom of heaven*, unleſs he receive it as a little child, he means, that no one whoſe behaviour does not bear a reſemblance to the behaviour of a little child, can be a member of that ſpiritual kingdom, which God hath eſtabliſhed in Chriſt—he can neither be a good Chriſtian here, nor inherit eternal life hereafter.

As the character therefore of little children is thus ſet before us as a pattern of imitation, let us *firſt* ſee in what this character conſiſts;—and *ſecondly*, let us make an application of it to ourſelves.

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In the *firſt* place, our Saviour muſt be ſuppoſed to ſpeak only of very young children—ſuch as *he took up in his arms;* for we ſoon ſee the ſeeds of malice, envy, falſhood, and other vices begin to ſhoot.

Nor can we ſuppoſe our Saviour intended we ſhould imitate the defects of children—their credulity—their ignorance—their want of reaſon—and want of judgment. His meaning, I think, includes only the five following particulars:—the *innocence of their manners*—their *contented minds*—their *kind affections*—their *teachable diſpoſitions*, and *truſt they repoſe in their parents.*

We firſt remark the *innocence of their manners.* This is the moſt ſtriking part of their character. No malicious intentions harbour in *their* breaſts. The injuries they receive are inſtantly forgotten. Thoughts of revenge, and miſchievous deſigns never keep *them* awake. They quietly lay down their heads, and go to reſt in peace with all the world.

They are as free from *fraud*, as they are from *malice.* They have no treacherous intentions—no deceit, no deep-laid ſchemes of diſhoneſty, nor ſhuffling of any kind. All is openneſs, ſimplicity, and

and ſincerity. Every expreſſion they uſe implies their real meaning; and whatever information they give you, you are ſure it is the truth.

Their breaſts are equally free from *envy*. They know not what it is to repine at the ſuperior poſſeſſions of another; nor to wiſh miſchief to thoſe who ſtand between them and their deſired enjoyments.

And is there nothing, think you, to be learned from all this? What happineſs would enſue, were our manners as free from falſhood and fraud—from envy and malice, and as pure and innocent as the manners of little children? What ſecurity and bleſſed comfort would even this world furniſh amidſt all its natural calamities?

Their *contented minds* make another part of the character of little children, which highly deſerves our imitation. Their breaſts are never diſtreſſed with the affairs of this world. No cares of getting—no fears of loſing—no anxious foreboding thoughts of any kind oppreſs their minds. Their eaſy day runs on, as the goſpel enjoins: they leave *the morrow to take thought for the things of itſelf*: with them, *ſufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*.

Here then the worldly man is called on to take example. You who are ſolicitous about this world—

world—who ſuffer it, whether you have ſmall or large poſſeſſions, to engroſs all your thoughts, look here, and ſee an image of that heavenly mind which alone can fit you for the kingdom of heaven. Worldly affections ſuit the world. *Let the dead bury their dead.* But would you wiſh to acquire heaven, you muſt copy the compoſure, the quiet, the diſintereſtedneſs, and the contentment of the little child.

But it is not only an abſtinence from vice that we are to imitate in little children, there is an appearance alſo of goodneſs in them, which highly deſerves our beſt imitation—that affection which is diſcernable in all their behaviour. They who are converſant with them, ſee numberleſs inſtances of their ſtrong affection for thoſe, with whom they are connected. Their love is overflowing for all the little offices of kindneſs which are done them. Always, but when in pain, they are in a diſpoſition to pleaſe and to be pleaſed.

Ye who know not what ſweetneſs of temper is, copy it here. When you are raviling each other—when, on ſome trifling matter, you let your paſſions riſe ſo high as to carry you into the extremes of bitterneſs; or when any little matter goes wrong in your families at home—as ſomething

is

is frequently going wrong—and you are peeviſh, ſour, and ſullen, or violent, ſtorming, and untractable, remember, on all theſe occaſions, what your Saviour ſays, that unleſs you copy the meekneſs of little children, you cannot enter the *kingdom of heaven*.—If the kingdom of heaven indeed were out of the queſtion, it is your intereſt here on earth to live kindly among each other. If God Almighty pleaſes to ſtraiten your circumſtances, do not add one evil to another. Ill-nature and brutality only make things worſe. Let your houſes at leaſt be comfortable. Kindneſs among yourſelves will ſweeten poverty. A burden borne by many who favour each other, will be leſs felt by all.

The next thing in which we are to imitate little children, is their *teachable ſpirit*.—The little child is at leaſt prepared to learn. It has no pride nor prejudice to contend with. The worldly man has often ſo much pride, that he is above learning from the goſpel. The ſcribes were above it. They had too high an opinion of themſelves to be taught: and there are ſtill many people, though they do not ſo much fall in your way, who ſet up their own reaſon as a light to follow, in oppoſition to revelation; and like the Phariſees of old, have too much

pride to believe the goſpel.—There are others again, who are too much prejudiced and worldly-minded to obey it: who being faſhioned after the manner of this world, prefer *its* cuſtoms, and *its* pleaſures, and *its* concerns to the precepts of the goſpel. Of this kind of people we have many among ourſelves. But if we had about us the humble teachable ſpirit of little children, we ſhould liſten more to religion, and leſs to the world. We ſhould believe the goſpel, and obey its precepts.

The laſt thing we are to imitate in little children, is that truſt which they repoſe in their parents. In every thing they look up to them. If they want food, they ſolicit their parents. If they want eaſe from pain, they apply to them: and from them they receive all the little gratifications of their lives.—Here is an exact image of that truſt which we ſhould repoſe in our heavenly father. On him we depend for every thing we enjoy, and ſhould therefore receive every thing as his gift. Our very amuſements and gratifications ſhould be received as indulgences from him. He permits them, and therefore we ſhould only uſe them as he allows.—Thus in all things we ſhould throw our-

ſelves as much on our heavenly father's care, as the child throws himſelf on that of his parents.

Having thus ſeen on what the imitable part of the character of little children conſiſts—Let us now, as was propoſed *ſecondly*, make an application of it to ourſelves.

You ſee then, my brethren, that although the little child hath all theſe appearances of goodneſs about him, they are only *appearances*; for, in fact, there is nothing yet in the little child that is either good or bad. All is ſimple nature; he has neither knowledge of duty, nor conſcience of tranſgreſſion. His actions are neither virtuous nor vicious. This appearance of goodneſs therefore is only a want of paſſions and appetites; and of an intimacy with the world, which hath not yet taken poſſeſſion of his heart. As his paſſions ariſe, the natural pravity of man appears. Children therefore are only recommended to our imitation, as we are ſent to learn induſtry from the ant, and reſignation to Providence from the fowls of the air.

Theſe *appearances* therefore of goodneſs in little children, you muſt improve into *realities*. That

purity—that innocence—that contentedneſs—that love, that teachable ſpirit, and that confidence, which the little child appears to have by *not knowing the world*, you are to gain by *conquering the world*. What it has by nature, you are to acquire by grace and religious habit; and what it diſcovers on ſome accidental occaſions, you are to make the ruling principles of your lives.

There is one thing more I ſhould wiſh you to conſider on this ſubject. *Receiving the kingdom of heaven as little children* is not recommended to us as a matter of prudence, or of worldly wiſdom: but as a matter of much greater moment: *Except ye receive the kingdom of heaven as little children*—conſider what follows—*ye ſhall not enter therein.*

Particular characters belong to particular ſtations. If a man wiſh to have an intereſt in the *kingdoms of this world*, he muſt *receive them* as a ſtateſman, as a lawyer, as a ſoldier, or under ſome character which relates to the kingdoms of this world. But if a man wiſh to *enter the kingdom of heaven*, he may be aſſured there is no other way of entering it, but by adding to his profeſſion in life the imitation of a little child.—It is humiliating enough, no

doubt, to the wiſe man of this world, to be told, that after the attainment of all his learning, and after all the pains he has taken to accompliſh himſelf, his acquirements are not equal in value to what he may learn from a little child—But ſo it is —and ſo indeed is the whole ſcheme of the Chriſtian religion. It is entirely founded on man's folly, and ignorance, and wickedneſs; and he who cannot relinquiſh his worldly ſchemes, and his worldly wiſdom, ſo far as to prefer the mild virtues of the goſpel before them;—if he cannot in the midſt of the world receive the kingdom of heaven with the innocence, the purity, and humility of a little child, the word of God aſſures him, that he has loſt what the world can never make up to him —his whole title to the promiſes of the goſpel.

SERMON VI.

MAT. V. 20.

I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT EXCEPT YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL EXCEED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, YE SHALL IN NO CASE ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

WE often reſt ſatisfied with a fair outſide. To be born in a Chriſtian country—to make a public profeſſion of the Chriſtian faith—and to lead a life unſtained by any notorious ſin, is enough to make a good Chriſtian. If other people conſider us in this light, (and we are very candid to each other,) we are ready enough to take our religion on truſt.

There is a faſhion in religion, as in every thing; and if we are in the faſhion it is well. In ancient times, when men ſtrictly followed the rules of the

the goſpel, a different kind of religion was in faſhion; and ſuch people as now often paſs for good Chriſtians, would then have been conſidered as *ſhameful men.* A man may now freely indulge the pleaſures of life: he may give the world his heart: he need not trouble his head with the intention, the conditions, the promiſes, or the threatenings of the goſpel—and yet he may be thought a very decent Chriſtian: he may be like his neighbours: he may be in the faſhion.

In little matters all this is well. In the trifling affairs of life, we may conform to the manners and cuſtoms of the world: we may ſuffer faſhion to make a change in our cloaths. But, for God's ſake, let us conſider that religion is exactly the ſame now it ever was: it admits no faſhion; and if we take our meaſures of it from what we commonly ſee practiſed in theſe declining days, we may call it Chriſtianity, if we pleaſe; but we may juſt as well call it any thing elſe. It is, in general, no more like Chriſtianity, than a modern man of faſhion is like an apoſtle.

The Scribes and Phariſees, under an hypocritical appearance, had theſe looſe notions of religion. Our Saviour therefore holds them out as examples

to us; and tells us positively, that *unless our righteousness should exceed theirs, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* It is proper therefore to examine in what their unrighteousness chiefly consisted; that by comparing ourselves with them, we may see whether our unrighteousness may not be of a piece with theirs.

Let it be remembered, however, that it is not, in general, the most exact way of getting a knowledge of ourselves, to compare our actions with those of others. It is commonly a deceitful method. We ought rather to compare them with the word of God. However, as our Saviour himself, in this case, holds out the Scribes and Pharisees as the objects of a comparison; and has, moreover, given us marks of distinction, we may be assured, that it is right to make the comparison.—In the following discourse, therefore, I shall *first* give you the scriptural character of the Scribes and Pharisees—and, *secondly*, draw a short comparison between us and them.

In the first place, the Scribes and Pharisees had lost all sense of religion. Our Saviour applies to them

them that paſſage of the prophet, *This people draweth nigh me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* They came indeed to the temple, and nobody lifted up their eyes and hands with more devotion; but they felt nothing of it in their hearts. Our Saviour preached to them, as John the Baptiſt had done before him; it ſignified nothing; they never attended to preaching. *They had eyes that would not ſee, and ears that would not hear, and hearts that would not underſtand.* Preaching to them was ſeed ſown on ſtony ground; it made no impreſſion.

What religion they had, if it could in any ſenſe be called religion, conſiſted merely in a few outward obſervances: they *tithed mint and cumin*, our Saviour tells them, and performed other little ceremonies of the law; while they omitted the weightier matters of it, judgment, mercy, and faith.

The great end of religion is to enable us to reſiſt the various temptations which ariſe from our different ſtations in life, and to fit ourſelves for a better world. If we are poor, we ſhould be content with our ſtation—live honeſtly with our neighbours, and bear our lot with reſignation to God. This turns poverty into religion. If we

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are rich, we ſhould guard againſt intemperance, vanity, and hard-heartedneſs to the poor: this turn riches into a bleſſing to ourſelves, and a comfort to others.

All this the Scribes and Phariſees knew well enough. They *ſat in Moſes's ſeat*, and had ſtudied the law, as far as *knowledge* went—but with regard to *practice*, they gave themſelves little trouble. The conſequence was, that knowledge, without practice, puffed them up. They *truſted in themſelves that they were righteous, and deſpiſed others*.

Inſtead of obeying what they knew to be the law of God, they made it their buſineſs to find out explanations to avoid it.—*Honour thy father and mother*, ſays the law. But, ſaid the Phariſee, if you tell your poor father you intend to dedicate your money to holy uſes, you may let him ſtarve.—Again, *Thou ſhalt not take God's name in vain*, ſays the commandment. No, not, God's name in vain, ſaid the Phariſee: but you may innocently ſwear by any thing elſe.—And thus too, when the law enjoined love and kindneſs to our neighbour, the Phariſee would aſk, who was his neighbour? Surely not his enemy; and leaſt of all a Samaritan.

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Good men of courſe theſe ſinners always hated, and were ever contriving and venting wicked lies againſt them. Even the unſpotted life of our bleſſed Saviour did not eſcape their malice. He was a wine-bibber: he was a glutton: he was a breaker of the law, becauſe forſooth he did good actions on the Sabbath. He was a friend of publicans and ſinners, becauſe, by mixing with them, he endeavoured to reclaim them.

As for charity, their hearts were ſtrangers to it. Inſtead of relieving the poor, *they devoured widows houſes*; and inſtead of aſſiſting their neighbours, they were full of *extortion and exceſs*.

And indeed how ſhould they have charity, or any other virtue? their thoughts were wholly ingroſſed by their worldly poſſeſſions. Covetouſneſs was among their grand vices: they ſcoffed at all the generous purpoſes for which wealth is given. When our bleſſed Saviour was diſcourſing on the true uſe of riches, and exhorting his hearers to make their wealth the means of their future happineſs—when he ſhewed them the great miſchief of ſetting their hearts on worldly things, forewarning them of the danger of a divided love; and ſhewed them the impoſſibility of ſerving God and mammon together—it happened, the text tells us, that

that ſome of the Phariſees were preſent. Such truths were very ill-calculated to make an impreſſion on them: and accordingly when the divine teacher was inſtructing the people, the Scribes and Phariſees endeavoured to draw off their attention by ridiculing him. But we are told the reaſon why they ridiculed him—*they were covetous themſelves.*

And yet with all this corruption, they wiſhed for nothing ſo much as a good character. They put on ſanctified faces—they faſted, they prayed, they would ſtand praying at the corners of ſtreets, merely that they might be ſeen of men, and be conſidered as holy and religious people. Hypocriſy is the grand cover of iniquity. Knavery unmaſked is at once detected.—We are told, a celebrated knave of our own country, who had long been notorious for his infamous life, uſed to ſay, he would give 10,000 *l.* for a good character. Not that he affected to have it believed, he valued a good character in itſelf; but he would have given 10,000 *l.* for it, becauſe he knew how to make 20,000 *l.* by it *. And this was juſt the notion of the Scribes and Phariſees. They deſired to be

* This ſtory is told of the celebrated Colonel Charters.

though

thought holy and religious men; not that they valued a religious character; but they had private ends to obtain, which could not be obtained without it.—What was ſtill worſe, it was the great endeavour of their lives to ſpread wickedneſs. *They would compaſs ſea and land to make one proſelyte, and when he was made, they made him ten times more the child of hell than themſelves.*

After all, one ſhould have hoped, theſe ſinners might have ſeen their evil ways, and having ſuch a teacher as the bleſſed Jeſus, might have repented. Many applications he made to them; but nothing like repentance *appears*. *We have Abraham to our father*, was their grand plea of righteouſneſs. Nothing was leſs in their hearts, than *to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.*

The ſcorning of divine grace, is a ſignal for every wickedneſs to enter. During the whole of our Saviour's miniſtry, theſe impenitent wretches grew worſe and worſe; too proud to acknowledge their faults—too hardened to amend them, till at length they filled up the meaſure of their iniquities by putting the bleſſed Jeſus to death.

Thus

Thus, my brethren, I have described to you the character of the Scribes and Pharisees, as we have it in scripture: let us now, as I proposed, *secondly*, make an application of it to ourselves.—Let us see, whether our righteousness exceeds theirs—or whether at the bottom we may not be of the sect of the Scribes and Pharisees ourselves?

The great use of these bad examples is to shew us, that when people begin to sit loose to religion, there is no point of wickedness to which they may not be carried. Here and there we see what the world calls a good moral man: but morality is often but a slight tie; whereas religion is an anchor, which holds all fast. Whether the wretched people we have been describing, were ever moral men, may be doubted. It is certain, they had no regard to the religion they professed, but attended only to a few showy ceremonies. Instead therefore of proceeding to greater heights of piety, as their minds might have been opened by the gospel, they fell from one wickedness to another, and at length to the greatest. Let us therefore try ourselves by our Saviour's rule, and see how far our religion

religion may be corrupted, after the examples before us.

We may all probably think, that if we had lived in thoſe days, we ſhould not have had a hand in putting the bleſſed Jeſus to death. Perhaps not. But do none of us, by living in oppoſition to his laws, *crucify*, as it were, *the ſon of God afreſh, and put him to an open ſhame?*—Perhaps none of us would *devour widows' houſes*: but are we never guilty of doing a hard thing to a neighbour? Or though we would not *compaſs ſea and land to make* wicked proſelytes; do we never ſet a bad *example* to thoſe beneath us; and take that moſt ſucceſsful way of making wicked proſelytes?

Again; do we never feel in our hearts that coldneſs, and indifference to the duties of religion, which the Scribes and Phariſees felt?—Do we feel nothing like their inattention to inſtruction—hearing the word, and not improving under it?—Do we never imitate them in the vile practice of ſwearing—or in their hypocritical pretences to religion; or do we never feel in ourſelves any thing like their envy, their malice, and defamation?—or like their ſpiritual pride—their leſſening their own offences, and diminiſhing crimes into errors—or perhaps like their worldly-mindedneſs and covetouſneſs

ouſneſs—or, what is worſt of all, their impenitent hardened hearts, and deafneſs to all the calls of repentance.—If we do find any thing like theſe vices and bad diſpoſitions in our own hearts, let us not lay all to the Scribes and Phariſees, but conſider whether our own unrighteouſneſs may not be of a piece with theirs. Let us repent in time, and do every thing in our power to amend, what is like ſo bad an example. Let it be our great point to hold faſt our religious principles. While we preſerve theſe, through God's mercy, we are ſafe. But when theſe give way, we may become mere Scribes and Phariſees in our conduct—*our righteouſneſs may not exceed theirs, and we ſhall, in no caſe, enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

SERMON VII.

PSALM lxxvii. 6.

IN THE NIGHT I COMMUNE WITH MINE OWN HEART.

THE night is here taken for thoſe times of ſolitude and ſilence, — thoſe calm, and quiet ſeaſons, when the buſy mind enjoys ſome pauſe — when it is uninterrupted by the reſtleſs trade of life, and unſolicited by its vanities. In theſe happy intervals, which the wiſe man finds as often as he can; and the thoughtleſs as ſeldom, *we commune with our own hearts* — we ſeek into all the little deceits which are ſo apt to get entrance there — we ſet a watch over our thoughts — we bring the mind home to that beſt of all purſuits, the knowledge of itſelf — we conſider ourſelves as the deſtined inhabitants of another world — we call our ſins to remembrance, and endeavour, by our ſincere reſo-

lutions of amendment, to have no miſcarriages to anſwer for, but ſuch infirmities as may hope forgiveneſs through the merits of Chriſt.—If this be not the frequent employment of our retired hours, we can only ſay, it ought to be.

In purſuing theſe thoughts, I ſhall *firſt* addreſs myſelf to ſuch as live in the *known breach* of their duty—*ſecondly*, to ſuch as lead only *careleſs* lives—and ſhall, *laſtly*, add a diſſuaſive to both.

With regard to the former, it is a wonderful thing, that men born to inherit everlaſting happineſs, ſhould caſt this great inheritance behind them, in exchange for what they call a few pleaſant years. We ſee it, and therefore we believe it. If we did not ſee it, it would be incredible. Such people, in bargaining for an eſtate, would at once ſee the difference between a perpetuity, and a ſhort leaſe. How wonderful then is it to find them ſo backward in transferring the idea to an infinitely greater concern—the compariſon between life and immortality!

If they wiſh to ſee things in a better light, and reform their lives—indeed, if they chuſe to run the riſk of dying in their ſins, and of the future puniſhment

puniſhment that awaits the impenitent ſinner, nothing more can be ſaid—but if they have any intention to reform their lives, their firſt buſineſs muſt be to examine the ſtate of their ſouls—what ſins they have been chiefly led into—where they have been moſt open to temptation, and leaſt able to oppoſe it.

Now this is taking no more care about their ſouls, than any man of ſenſe would take about his houſe. If his houſe was in a crazy condition he would carefully examine it. He would find out where the roof was faulty—where the rain got entrance—or where the wall was likely to give way: and would endeavour immediately to remedy the defect. Surely then, my friend, it calls—not your wiſdom—but even your common ſenſe in queſtion, if you would not do as much for your ſoul, as almoſt any man would do for his houſe.

Examine therefore into the repairs wanting in your ſouls. Recollect your ſins, and the occaſions that commonly lead you into them, that you may make up your accounts with heaven, before it be too late. Theſe accounts, you will remember, muſt be made up at one time. You may defer them; but you will recollect, that deferring a debt is only increaſing it.

To recall to memory all the ſins of a looſe and wicked life, would be impoſſible. But the difficulty of the taſk ſhould not hinder the attempt. If you have been inconſiderate, and have run deeply into debt, you cannot perhaps reckon up all the particulars of idle expence that have increaſed it; yet, if you mean to pay, you will take care to recollect all the great ſums.

Now the wickedneſs of moſt men runs, as it were, in *great ſums*. Though you may have many ſins to anſwer for, yet, in ſome particular way, you are generally moſt guilty.—You have been given perhaps to cheat your neighbour, which is done, you know, in various ways—or your chief vice may have been drinking to exceſs——or, perhaps, ſwearing, or falſhood in your converſation; for though a man's prevailing ſin is generally connected with other ſins, yet his prevailing ſin will at leaſt bring to his remembrance his moſt common offences. Till you are well convinced of the heinous nature of theſe habitual ſins, there is little hope of reformation in other matters.

Together with your ſins, it is proper alſo to conſider the various circumſtances which may have attended them, and increaſed their guilt.—Many of them, for inſtance, may have been injurious

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to your neighbour, beyond your power now to recompence. Can you recal the miſchievous ſlander which you may have ſent abroad; and which, with much ill-natured pleaſure, is now retailed by numbers through a country? Or can you recollect the various frauds you may have been guilty of, yet unatoned for by a fair reſtitution?

It may be proper alſo to conſider, how many of your ſins have been committed againſt the clear knowledge of your duty, and the checks of conſcience—againſt the reproof of friends—and contrary to reſolutions and vows repeatedly made.

Laſtly, it is a conſideration of no little weight, that inſtead of *making your light ſhine before men*, you may have thrown an open ſcandal upon religion by your wicked lives, and have ſpread it abroad by your example. Parents often corrupt their children, and maſters their ſervants, by the force of example: and yet example is little conſidered, though it is more powerful than precept, and leads many into guilt, who might have eſcaped a more direct application?

Thus far I have addreſſed myſelf to thoſe among you, who may have *moſt* to anſwer for. But they,

who cannot recollect any heinous ſins, are not therefore to think themſelves innocent. A careleſs life will ſoon become a wicked one. Indeed it is a wicked one, if it be not daily corrected. Where is the man who has not, with all his care, many a ſmaller ſin to recollect?—his warm paſſions, which are continually flying out into violence—or a covetous inclination, which muſt be narrowly watched—or a diſpoſition to indolence and pleaſure—or perhaps a hardneſs of heart towards his poor brethren—or a coldneſs in his devotions—and a want of all heavenly affection.

Of one or other of theſe wrongneſſes, or of ſomething equally bad, all of us, even the beſt, if he narrowly watch his own heart, will find frequent intimations. But whatever our failings are, we ſhould often recollect them, if we wiſh to amend them. Let us always remember our Saviour's parable, and aſk our hearts, *From whence have they weeds?* Weeds they will have from the native foulneſs of the ſoil: but theſe *weeds*, (though left to themſelves, *they* will penetrate deep,) if taken on their firſt appearance, may be drawn out with a touch.—This is the huſbandman's care, and ſhould be ours.

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When ſinners of all denominations have thus before their eyes a view of their ſins, one ſhould ſuppoſe the next ſtep an eaſy one—and that they could not help frequently aſking themſelves, How all this was to conclude?

To what concluſion enormous wickedneſs leads is not difficult to ſhew. Any finger can point out the broad way to deſtruction. But on what ground the luke-warm Chriſtian ſtands—where the line is to be drawn between ſuch faults, as God Almighty knows, we may avoid—and ſuch as are merely the infirmities of human nature—is a more difficult point. This however is certain, that no wrongneſſes of temper, inclination, paſſion, or appetite, in which we *knowingly continue*, can on any pretence be called the infirmities of human nature, or can be ſafe on any ground of Chriſtianity. Every man has his propenſity, no doubt, to ſome wrong inclination: and let us do the beſt we can, we may often be ſurprized on this blind ſide. But there is a mighty difference between this and *allowing* any tranſgreſſion however ſmall. When the *mind conſents*—obſerve—when the *mind conſents*—the wrong thought, or wrong action, whatever it is, becomes guilt.

Let us not then be ſatisfied with *communing with our own hearts*, and merely making good reſolutions. The great point is, to put theſe reſolutions in force. It is eaſy to reſolve; the difficulty is to practiſe. The caſe is this; when we make our good reſolutions, we make them in private—all is calm—nothing diſturbs us—we have no temptations to oppoſe—and of conſequence we ſee the matter in a clear light.—But when we are to put theſe reſolutions in practice, we are engaged in the world—then comes the temptation—each man's darling ſin, which muſt be indulged in this way or that—his paſſion, which conquers him—the envy—the pride—or the malice of his heart—or his love of gain, which has taken ſuch hold of him, that he is unwilling to give it up. In making the reſolution, there is none of theſe difficulties. The mind itſelf is honeſt. It ſees what is right, and would purſue it. Our firſt buſineſs therefore is, to impoſe on ourſelves. We are unwilling to think the miſchief ſo great as it really is—we find a thouſand excuſes—various circumſtances, which either our particular way of life—the profeſſion we are engaged in—the company we are obliged to keep, or ſomething, which we are willing to hope will

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make an excuſe before God.—Thus we go on from day to day. The year comes round, and the concluſion of it finds us no more advanced in Chriſtian perfection, than we were in the beginning. The ſame wrongneſſes of temper—the ſame coldneſs in religion—and the ſame attachment to the world, which prevailed laſt year, prevail ſtill. At length mortality ſinks under us, and we carry all our bad habits and wrong diſpoſitions down with us to the grave—This is too true a picture of the generality of men.

Having thus addreſſed myſelf *firſt* to thoſe, who live in the known breach of their duty; and, *ſecondly*, to ſuch chiefly as lead careleſs lives, I ſhall now, *laſtly*, add a diſſuaſive to both.

To this purpoſe, I ſhall juſt lay before you, as the moſt forcible diſſuaſive I can think of, our bleſſed Saviour's * parable of the ten virgins, who went to meet the bridegroom. Five were wiſe, and five were fooliſh. All took lamps; but the wiſe, knowing the bridegroom's approach was uncertain, took oil with them to be in conſtant readi-

* Mat. xxv. 1.

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neſs to trim their lamps whenever occaſion ſhould require. The fooliſh virgins had omitted this precaution.—Thus ſituated, they all took their repoſe. But their ſlumbers were preſently diſturbed. At midnight a cry was made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go you out to meet him *. The wiſe virgins, who were ready at a moment's warning, inſtantly trimmed their lamps, and joined the company. But the fooliſh, having no oil, were thrown into confuſion. It was now too late to procure a freſh ſupply—the bridgroom came—the proceſſion followed—the door was ſhut—and the fooliſh virgins were excluded.

I need not tell you, that under the ſimilitude of the wiſe virgins, are repreſented thoſe who are truly religious—thoſe *who have communed with their own hearts*—and are always ready to meet the bridegroom—that is, the time of their death, whenever it ſhall pleaſe God to call.—On the other hand, by the fooliſh virgins are meant thoſe, who are very ready to make good reſolutions—they had trimmed their lamps for the preſent; but their re-

* This repreſentation was agreeable to the cuſtoms of the Jews, among whom marriages were commonly celebrated in the night; and the bridegroom was carried home by a proceſſion of his friends.

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ſolutions ended in nothing. They had not the wiſdom to take oil in their veſſels—ſo that their lamps, of courſe, were ſoon extinguiſhed.

In the mean time, while the bridegroom tarried, we are told, they *all ſlumbered and ſlept*—that is, during the time of their lives upon earth, both the wiſe and the fooliſh went about their ordinary buſineſs in this world; only with this difference, that the wiſe had reſpect to the future, as well as the preſent. They were ready and prepared, both to live in the world, and alſo to leave it. Their lamps were not only trimmed for the preſent, but they had oil for the future.

This being the caſe of the wiſe and fooliſh, now mark the great event. Behold at midnight, *a cry is made.* This is meant to expreſs the ſuddenneſs of death. It does not ſo much mean an unexpected death, as a death, for which *no preparation hath been made;* and this is what we pray againſt in our litany, when we pray againſt *ſudden death.* They who have their lamps trimmed, or have oil in their veſſels ready to trim them, are prepared to meet the bridegroom, and enter with him at once into the marriage chamber. To them death is no ſurpriſe.—But with the unprepared it is otherwiſe. All with them is confuſion and diſtreſs. In the

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time of their health and ſtrength they had communed little with their own hearts. If they had communed more, a guilty retroſpect might not now have alarmed them—but they had run their courſe—their day was over—the door was ſhut—vain was their cry, Lord, Lord, open to us: A voice anſwered, "*I know you not—depart from me, all ye workers of wickedneſs.*"—And yet, you ſee, theſe were not among the moſt heinous *workers of wickedneſs.* They had lighted their lamps with a full reſolution to meet the bridegroom. Had they been deſperate ſinners they would wholly have kept back. But this was not the caſe. They did make a faint effort, but they had not reſolution to purſue it. In ſhort, theſe fooliſh virgins repreſent thoſe chiefly who lead careleſs lives—who wiſh indeed to go to heaven; but they wiſh to go thither along the high-way of the world—and if that be not the ſafeſt road, it is at leaſt the eaſieſt, and the moſt pleaſant. Thus, as both heaven and the world cannot equally be enjoyed, the future muſt give way to the preſent.

The great concluſion which our Saviour draws from the whole, ſhould be an alarming leſſon againſt ſinners of all denominations. *Watch there-*

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fore, for ye know neither the day, nor the hour, when the ſon of man cometh.

Since therefore, my brethren, this is an hour which we muſt all, at one time, meet—ſince, with all our arts and deceits, we cannot eſcape it, let us prepare for it in time, when we may do it with eaſe, and comfort, and ſecurity. Let not a morning riſe upon us without ſuggeſting the aweful queſtion, Whether we are prepared to conſider that day as our laſt? Let not an evening draw its ſhade around us, without reminding us, that the the cloſing of our eyes this night may be the ſleep of death.—Thus let us *commune with our own hearts.* Of all the company we can keep, our own hearts are the moſt improving. The heart is one of thoſe plain, ſincere friends, which, unleſs it be deceived itſelf, will never deceive us. In communing with it we find the truth. But the truth is not always agreeable. We go rather to the world for company. Here we paſs the idle hour, the careleſs day, the joyous evening. We deal time away as if it were of no value; and get nothing in return except diſſipated habits. But in

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communing with our own hearts, we learn true wiſdom—we become wiſe for ourſelves, and wiſe for eternity.—God grant we may all *ſo commune with them*—that thoſe hearts, ſo apt to *wander among the ſundry, and manifold things of this world, may ſurely there at length be fixed, whoſe true joys are to be found through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

SERMON VIII.

LUKE, xxi. 3.

OF A TRUTH I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT THIS POOR WIDOW HATH CAST IN MORE THAN THEY ALL: FOR ALL THESE HAVE OF THEIR ABUNDANCE CAST IN UNTO THE OFFERINGS OF GOD, BUT SHE OF HER PENURY HATH CAST IN ALL THE LIVING THAT SHE HAD.

AS our bleſſed Saviour was paſſing with his diſciples through one of the courts of the temple, he obſerved the people throwing their offerings into the treaſury. The treaſury here meant was a cheſt with an opening at the top to collect the alms of the people, which were intended to furniſh neceſſaries for the temple-ſervice; the overplus was given to the poor. Into this cheſt many who were rich, threw plentifully. But among them came a poor widow, we read, who

threw in what ſhe had, which was not more in value than a farthing. Jeſus turning to his diſciples, ſaid, *Of a truth I ſay unto you, that this poor widow hath caſt in more than they all: for all theſe have of their abundance caſt in unto the offerings of God, but ſhe of her penury hath caſt in all the living that ſhe had.*

From theſe words I ſhall examine, *firſt*, what it was that gave ſo ſingular a value to the ſlender offering of this poor woman.—And ſhall, *ſecondly* apply her caſe to ourſelves.

In the *firſt* place, what gave value to her offering was, her giving *all ſhe could.* But here is a little difficulty. It is ſaid, ſhe gave *all her living.* Now, if ſhe had literally done that, it is plain, ſhe would have made herſelf a greater object than thoſe ſhe wiſhed to relieve, which there is no reaſon to ſuppoſe. Beſides, the ſum was ſo ſmall, that ſhe could not poſſibly have *lived* upon it, if ſhe *had kept it all to herſelf.* For though the ſum mentioned would have purchaſed conſiderably more at that time, than the ſame ſum would purchaſe now, yet it is mentioned as a very ſmall ſum, and undoubtedly was not proportioned to a livelihood. It will remove

remove the difficulty, either if we ſuppoſe this little ſum was all ſhe had about her—or that it was all the proviſion ſhe had made for her next meal; which ſhe might probably have denied herſelf for the ſake of a charitable action: ſo that in either of theſe ſenſes, ſhe may be ſaid to have given what ſhe had.

But now, all that is mentioned in Scripture to the credit of this worthy woman is, that ſhe *gave all ſhe could:* yet as one virtue is generally accompanied with others, it may reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that in all *other* reſpects ſhe *did* all ſhe could. God places mankind, for the benefit of ſociety, in various ſtations. Of courſe, he gives them various means and opportunities of performing their duty: and according to theſe he expects a return. So that the poor man, who faithfully diſcharges the truſt however ſmall, which God hath given him, does all, however little, which God requires. In *giving*, the poor widow gave all ſhe could: but as we have ſuppoſed the ſame good principle ran through all the offices of her life, ſhe was, no doubt, *exemplary* in them all.

Yet ſtill it muſt be obſerved, that merely *doing what ſhe did*, would not have entitled her to commendation, unleſs ſhe had *done it on a good motive.* The Chriſtian religion is a religion of the

heart. It is not ſo much the action which God regards, as the good motive on which the action is performed. The Chriſtian religion therefore is a religion of *motives*. Faith in Chriſt is the great *mean;* and to pleaſe God, the great *motive* on which all our actions ſhould be performed. This gives a value to the meaneſt trifle. Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, if we do it *to the glory of God*—that is, with a ſincere deſire to pleaſe God, it will be accepted. Even in common life, the motive gives a value to the action. If a perſon does you an act of kindneſs, you are grateful. But if you have juſt ground to believe, he did it not to ſerve *you*, but merely to ſerve *himſelf*—or through vanity perhaps—or ſome other motive, your gratitude towards him decreaſes in proportion to your knowledge of the unfriendlineſs of the motive. On the other hand, if you ſhould be received at the time of ſome extremity, in the cottage of the pooreſt perſon, who ſhould ſet before you the meaneſt fare, but with the beſt good-will to aſſiſt you, and where there could be no ſelf-intereſt to ſerve, your heart would in earneſt feel the kindneſs, and atteſt it with gratitude.

Our heavenly father accepts *our* motives in the ſame manner—only with him there is this difference:

ence: He ſees all our motives at once; whereas men only gueſs at the motives of each other; and therefore ought to be cautious in aſſigning them.—Thus then, however religious our actions may appear to men, if they do not proceed from a motive of duty, and a deſire to pleaſe God, they are unacceptable in his ſight.—Every action, in ſhort, is made up of two parts—the *deed* itſelf—and the *motive*, or intention, on which the deed was performed. The law conſiders only the *deed*. If you commit a treſpaſs againſt your neighbour, though you had no intention to do it, you muſt abide the conſequence. The goſpel is more gentle. It conſiders the intention more than the deed; inaſmuch as it takes cogniſance of the heart, which the law cannot do.—In all our actions therefore, it is the motive which gives them value in the ſight of God: and this, no doubt, was the caſe of the widow's mite. It would not otherwiſe have been accepted.

Having thus ſeen, that the poor widow *did more than they* all, by doing *what ſhe could*, and likewiſe by doing it on *a good motive*, let me now, as I propoſed, *ſecondly*, apply her caſe to ourſelves.

In the firſt place, we are to imitate her by doing all we can. But ſome may ſay, we can never be certain of doing all we can. A man hardly knows what he can do; and to be always on the ſtretch to do our utmoſt, is more than can be expected from *human nature.*

Then God does not expect it from *you.* No doubt, if we go to the rigour of the caſe, no man does his utmoſt. We muſt all therefore truſt in God to make merciful allowances for our infirmities; and in the merits of Chriſt to make atonement for them.—But though it is true, no man does the utmoſt he *can*, yet it behoves him not to make this an excuſe for doing leſs than he *might.* If the poor widow had ſaid, as I have but little, God cannot expect any thing from me, ſhe would have fallen ſhort of the commendation ſhe received. And we may always be ſure we do leſs than we might, when we offend againſt our *known duty.* Though a man cannot always, perhaps, practiſe what he knows he ought to do, yet he may always leave undone what he knows he ought *not* to do. He is under no neceſſity to ſwear, for inſtance, to drink—to cheat—to break the ſabbath.—What difference is there among men! Some with much, do little: others with little, do much. When we

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ſee a labouring man carrying with him a ſenſe of religion through his buſy day—when we ſee him induſtrious and content—not looking beyond his ſtation, but behaving properly in it—when we ſee him careful to inſtruct his family as well as he can, conſtant at church, and generally finding a little time in an evening to read his bible, we ſee a character of as much dignity as human nature can exhibit. What a contraſt between him and numbers whom we ſee daily abuſing the abundance God hath given them, merely in gratifying themſelves; and going out of the world without leaving one trace behind them of any good they have done in it! With a ſingle mite the humble labourer has done *more than they all.*

Let us then all do what may reaſonably be ſuppoſed the utmoſt we can. Our gracious maſter hath ſet us all our taſks—our ſeveral ſtations in life are our taſks—talents they are ſometimes called in ſcripture—and God expects nothing from us beyond the abilities he hath given. If he expect bounty from the rich man; from the poor man he expects only his mite. All we have is of God's giving. Our beſt returns are of courſe his due.

But we farther ſee, my brethren, that if we wiſh to pleaſe God, we are not only to do all we

can, but we are to do it on a *good motive*. The very ſame action may be done with a good intention, or a bad intention—it may be done to ſerve ſome ſelfiſh purpoſe, or it may be done to ſerve a poor neighbour, which God conſiders as if done to himſelf. But unleſs our intention be good, we have ſeen the *action alone* can never be pleaſing to God. It is what, according to ſome falſe ideas of religion, is called the *work done*—the form or ceremony ſtands for the duty. The prayer is enough, though the heart is unconcerned. The alms-deed is ſufficient, whatever the motive is. And thus it is to be feared, we dignify many actions with the name of *good*, when perhaps there is no good belonging to them.

When therefore you do any action, which you wiſh to be a religious one, conſider on what motive you do it. Your heart will tell you its value. As you bring gold to the touchſtone, bring the action to the heart. If you are there aſſured you do it with a good intention; that is, without any deſign of ſerving yourſelf, or gaining praiſe, but merely to pleaſe God, or aſſiſt your neighbour, you may hope it *will* be pleaſing to God. But ſtill you muſt not preſume upon it, and ſuppoſe you derive any merit from doing it.

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That will again ſpoil all.—Beſides, the heart is very deceitful; and you may eaſily deceive yourſelf. A bad motive, without care in examining it, may eaſily paſs for a good one.

Let it then always be our care to aſk ourſelves what is our intention in every action which we mean to be religious. For what purpoſe do I go to church? Is it really out of conſcience to pay my devotion to God?—For what purpoſe do I go to the ſacrament? Is it really to remember the death of my bleſſed Saviour, and to make reſolutions againſt ſin? With what view do I give alms to a poor neighbour? Is it really to relieve him, without any other intention but that of pleaſing God? —In this way let us call ourſelves to account, endeavouring always to pleaſe God by the *ſecret motive*, rather than man by the *outward action*.—I will not ſay, that a perſon need think his actions diſagreeable to God, if he have not the religious motive continually in his mind. When the benevolent, and religious habit is formed, the action follows of courſe; and if we are ſure we have *no intereſted motive* in view, it may be enough.

Having thus ſeen what gave value to the widow's mite—and how we ought to apply her caſe to ourſelves, I ſhall draw the whole to a concluſion, by obſerving, how very comfortable a doctrine this portion of ſcripture holds out to people in low condition. We ſee they have it juſt as much in their power to render an acceptable ſervice to God, as thoſe in the richeſt circumſtances. If God Almighty accepted the ſervices of thoſe only, who had much to give, the caſe of the poor would be hard. But he hath enabled the poor, you ſee, to give a value even to a mite. And in another place, the ſame doctrine is inculcated, where we are told, even a cup of cold water given in the name of a diſciple, ſhall have its reward: the *motive*, not the *value* of the gift, is conſidered.

Who would not endeavour then to pleaſe his gracious maſter, when he can do it at ſo eaſy a price? When he has in his power to give a value to a mere trifle. You ſow your corn for increaſe, and are rejoiced if you have a good harveſt. But what abundant increaſe may your good actions produce? A mite, properly ſown, may increaſe ten thouſand fold. However low our circumſtances are, we may make them, if we pleaſe, as acceptable

to God as any circumſtances in which we could have been placed.—The ſtory of Dives and Lazarus will illuſtrate all I have ſaid. Lazarus, who had nothing, but a good diſpoſition, was received into *Abraham's boſom;* while Dives, who poſſeſſed every thing, *but that*, was condemned to a *place of torment.*

God grant us all grace thus to lay up our treaſure in heaven, and by making every action of our lives, as far as we can, agreeable to him, may we finally obtain the bleſſed reward of thoſe, who do God's will, through Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord!

SERMON IX.

MAT. V. 4.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

THE *kingdom of heaven* is here promiſed, you find, to poorneſs of ſpirit.

In the following diſcourſe I ſhall, *firſt*, endeavour to explain to you in what this holy temper conſiſts —I ſhall, *ſecondly*, ſhew you, that it is both a reaſonable, and a Chriſtian temper—and, *thirdly*, I ſhall point out the happineſs of thoſe who have attained it.

With regard to the meaning of the expreſſion, *poorneſs of ſpirit*, (which may be better tranſlated *humility of ſpirit* *,) it hath but an ill name in the

* See Parkhurſt's Lexion on the word πτωχος.

world.

world. In the ears of few people it ſounds like a virtue, but rather gives the idea of a low cowardly temper, that will ſubmit to any man's humour, and bear any indignity without feeling it. I know not how interpreters come at this ſenſe of the expreſſion. In no part of ſcripture, that I recollect, are we forbidden to feel an injury, or to ſhew a proper reſentment *. What is enjoined in ſcripture on that head is, to paſs over many little matters, which the world is apt to conſider as injuries. So that before we allow ourſelves to reſent, we muſt be well aſſured the matter is worth reſenting. It is not every trifling offence that ſhould come under the head of an injury. We muſt, in moſt caſes, *turn the other cheek*—we muſt expoſe ourſelves again to ſuch little injuries, rather than reſent them.—And even with regard to the greateſt injuries, we are forbidden to return evil for evil; we are enjoined to be open to the firſt tender of reconciliation, and to be ready, on the repentance of an adverſary, to forgive the greateſt injuries.

Again, this humbled ſpirit hath no neceſſary connection with a low condition of life. A rich man may poſſeſs it, and a poor man want it. Their

* See John, xviii. 23.—Acts, xxiii. 3.—Acts, xvi. 37, &c.

condition

condition in life makes no difference. Only indeed this virtue, as many others, is not ſo eaſily attained by a rich man.

This gentle virtue, therefore, naturally connected with no ſtate of life, is a holy diſpoſition of mind: it is of Chriſtian origin, unknown in any claſs of *mere moral* duties; and is oppoſed chiefly to the two great vices of *worldly-mindedneſs* and *pride*, both which are often dreſſed up in the garb of virtues.

When we conſider *poorneſs of ſpirit* as oppoſed to *worldly-mindedneſs*, it ſignifies our ſitting looſe to the things of this world—it ſignifies our being ſo little ſolicitous about them, that if it ſhould pleaſe God to take them from us, we could be well-contented without them—or if we have them, that we are ready to reſign them, either when God thinks fit to deprive us of them, or when we cannot keep them with a good conſcience. *Poorneſs of ſpirit*, when thus oppoſed to *worldly-mindedneſs*, is neither more nor leſs than that ſtate ſo deſirable by all Chriſtians, which the apoſtle Paul calls *being abſent from the body, and preſent with the Lord*: or, as we have it from the ſame high authority, it is *ſetting our affections on things above, not on things of the earth*.

Again,

Again, when it is oppoſed to *pride*, it ſignifies a low opinion of ourſelves—of our underſtanding—of our acquirements—and religious attainments. The poor in ſpirit is always ready to prefer others to himſelf, becauſe he knows more of himſelf, than he does of others. Nor does he take offence when he ſees a preference given to them. And indeed this is ſo much the caſe, that it is a kind of proof, whether he poſſeſſes this Chriſtian ſpirit. If on ſeeing any one preferred to him, or more reſpected, he feels any reſentment, he may depend upon it, his reſentment is founded in pride. And though he may be ſo much maſter of himſelf as to conceal the *proud looks*, of which David ſpeaks; yet he certainly cannot apply to himſelf the remaining part of the deſcription, in *refraining his ſoul, and keeping it low, even as a weaned child.* The poor in ſpirit hath none of this pride either in his behaviour, or in his opinions. His own deficiencies always come forward in his thoughts, and ſtifle every riſing ſentiment of his own importance. He laments them, inſtead of wiſhing to ſee them exalted; and humbly hopes, that by admiring the virtues of others, inſtead of degrading them, he may improve his own heart, by copying the good which he ſees in them.

Such

Such is the *nature* of poorneſs of ſpirit. Let us, *ſecondly*, conſider it both as a *reaſonable* and a *Chriſtian* temper.

Firſt, if we conſider it as oppoſed to *worldly-mindedneſs*, it is certainly *reaſonable*.—There is one great miſtake in life, which men in general are too apt to fall into; and that is to conſider themſelves as made up only of *body*: they think of their *ſouls* only as mere ſecondary parts of themſelves—or, if they think of them at all—as mere appendages of the body.—Now, if you allow this to *be* a great miſtake in life, as I ſuppoſe you all will, you muſt, at the ſame time, ſee how *unreaſonable* it is to think of nothing but worldly matters; becauſe worldly matters relate only to your bodies, and have no concern with your *ſouls*.—Again, the *reaſonableneſs* of this virtue is ſtrongly enforced by Chriſtianity, which enjoins us, in a hundred paſſages, to *mortify our members upon earth*—to *beware of covetouſneſs*—and to conſider ſeriouſly, that *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*:—for as the end of the Chriſtian religion is, to bring ſtraying man to his true happineſs—to purify his affections, and fit him for a heavenly ſtate—we ſhould ſit looſe to the world, and conſider ourſelves as *ſtrangers and pilgrims*

pilgrims upon earth, girding up our loins, and being always ready to take our departure to our heavenly home.—Such is the language of Chriſtianity!

Nor is *poorneſs of ſpirit*, as oppoſed to *worldly-mindedneſs*, more a reaſonable and a Chriſtian virtue, than when oppoſed to *pride*.—Pride muſt certainly appear very *unreaſonable* to every man, who will be at the pains of conſidering himſelf as he ought, in the two lights of a *creature* and a *ſinner*.

That man is a *creature* is a very *reaſonable* ground for humility. We uſually think it a humbling conſideration to remind a perſon of the meanneſs of his birth. But as to that matter, we are all much on a level; and may all, with equal juſtice be reminded of the meanneſs of our birth, for we all ſprang from nothing. The world, it is true, makes a great matter of *birth and family*; and merely, in a political light, ſome conſideration may be due to theſe diſtinctions. But *they who poſſeſs them*, ſhould always conſider them in a moral light; and whatever reſpect others may pay to theſe diſtinctions for the ſake of order in ſociety, the poſſeſſors ſhould totally diſclaim it in their own hearts. With this world the rules of ſociety end. In a moral light, we are all on an equality: and equally depend

depend as much for our exiſtence on the will of our Creator, as the image in the glaſs on the perſon who ſtands before it. And ſhall ſuch a creature be proud? For God's ſake of what? unleſs we can be ſo abſurd as to be proud of having nothing.—We often laugh at the *appearance of pride* in certain animals of the brute creation. We laugh, becauſe we think ſuch appearances ridiculous in creatures ſo contemptible; but alas! we only deride ourſelves.

Man, therefore, as a *creature*, hath ſufficient cauſe to be humble: but if he conſiders himſelf as a *ſinner* likewiſe, he hath than abundant. In truth, the beſt of us knows enough of himſelf to make him humble. — Whoever thou art, whoſe ſecret thoughts are inclined to pride, review thy paſt life. Hath none of thine actions been barefacedly wicked? It is well. But let not that raiſe thy pride.—Proceed a ſtep farther; review thy private intentions—thy abſurd ſchemes of worldly vanity—the motives of *thoſe* actions, which look fair to the world—the envy, the malice, or the hatred, which lodge in thy wicked heart, and that innumerable train of follies which are floating about it from morning till night.—Review all this, and if thou doſt not find enough to make thee humble, I fear

thou

thou either knoweſt nothing of the nature of ſin and folly, or thou haſt taken only a very ſlight review of thy heart.

Poorneſs of ſpirit, oppoſed to pride, appearing thus to be a *reaſonable* virtue, few words will ſhew it to be *a Chriſtian* one alſo. It is, indeed, in the ſtrongeſt manner inforced upon us in ſcripture, both by precept and example. In one place, we are told, that *God reſiſteth the proud*—in another we are enjoined *to cloath ourſelves with humility*—in a third, *not to be high minded*—in a fourth, *to be meek and lowly in heart;* and in a hundred others to the ſame purpoſe—all which precepts are only different ways of enjoining that duty, which the text calls *poorneſs of ſpirit.* Indeed, to ſay the truth, there is no duty in the goſpel ſo often recommended to us as humility—both becauſe it is difficult to be attained, and becauſe it is the foundation of all other virtues. Inſtruction does not eaſily approach the heart of that man, who already thinks highly of himſelf.

Again, we have a variety of examples in ſcripture of this virtue. John the Baptiſt was an eminent inſtance of humility.—Such alſo was the Virgin Mary, who received the high favours of God with that meek humility, which ſhewed how de-

ſerving ſhe was of them.—St. Paul alſo was a remarkable example of humility.—Many other inſtances might be produced: but our Saviour himſelf may ſtand for all: and indeed from his taking every opportunity to give a leſſon of humility in his *own life*, (which with regard to himſelf was ſurely needleſs,) we may judge how very neceſſary he thought humility in all his followers. Nothing certainly ought to act more ſtrongly upon us than theſe ſcriptural examples. If theſe holy perſons thought humility ſo neceſſary to *them*, what ought *we* to think?

Having thus explained the *nature* of poorneſs of ſpirit, and ſhewn you that it is both a *reaſonable* and a *Chriſtian* virtue, I ſhall, *laſtly*, ſhew you the happineſs it leads to.

In the firſt place, from what diſtreſſes of various kinds muſt that man be free, who is convinced of the vanity of all worldly things, and lives entirely to God. He is free not only from the diſtreſſes which attend the frequent diſappointment of his wiſhes; but from the diſtreſs of finding, when they are obtained, they do not anſwer his expectations. It is an undoubted truth, that every man, ſooner

ſooner or later will find, that the world will diſappoint him. Some men find out this truth early. Others are many years in finding it out. And many never find it out at all, till at the cloſe of life, it forces itſelf upon them. Happy is that man, who can learn this great truth at a cheaper rate than by ſuffering from it—who can be *convinced*, before *diſappointment* convinces him. Such a man is above the world. The world cannot hurt *him*. To him it is of no conſequence, whether it flatters or frowns.—And though it is the height of religion only, which can carry us thus far—much farther than the generality of people can go, yet every endeavour is ſomething; and, by the bleſſing of God, and holy hope in the joys of religion, we may arrive, by degrees, at greater attainments.

Then again, as to *pride*, it is certainly a moſt uneaſy companion. The proud man never meets with that reſpect which he thinks his due. He has ſo high an opinion of himſelf, that all the reſpect you *can* pay him, falls ſhort of what he thinks you *ſhould* pay him, and all the deficiency becomes matter of diſtreſs. In ſhort, no man can enjoy what he really is, when he thinks himſelf ſomething *more* than he is. Nor can any man enjoy

himſelf, when he puts his happineſs in the hands of *others*.

But perhaps example may be inſtructive in this point alſo. There is a ſtory in ſcripture ſtrong to our purpoſe. It is the ſtory of Haman, contained in the book of Eſther.

Haman was the next perſon in the kingdom of Perſia to the king himſelf. Every thing that wealth and power could give, Haman poſſeſſed. But—there was one thing, which, amidſt all his poſſeſſions cruelly hurt him. It is true, he was a bad man, and wanted the joys of religion: but the joys of religion entered not into Haman's ideas of happineſs. That was not the matter. His happineſs was all centered in the things of this world. He had them all; but yet ſtill was unhappy. What then could be the cauſe of his unhappineſs?—He was aſhamed to tell. The text ſays, he *reſtrained* himſelf; that is, he was aſhamed, like other fools of the ſame kind, to let the world ſee his folly. But, when he got among his particular friends, the mighty ſecret came out. Mordecai, the Jew, had not paid him that reverence which he expected.

Now, you can all ſee the folly of Haman, in ſuffering the happineſs of his life to be thus diſturbed by

by ſuch a trifling incident, as the want of a bow from Mordecai the Jew. But yet the caſe is not ſo uncommon as to ſurprize us. There is ſomething in human nature that teacheth us all to believe, we are of more conſequence than we really are. Hence ariſe a number of thoſe little quarrels and diſguſts, and offence taken at trifles, which we often ſee among people even in the loweſt ſtations. Few of us have that modeſt opinion of ourſelves which we ought to have. There is nothing indeed ſo trifling, my good neighbour, which pride cannot turn into as ridiculous an offence, as the want of a bow from Mordecai the Jew.

Now poorneſs of ſpirit, which is recommended in the text, is the proper cure of all theſe evils. It renders us mild and gentle, and humble and contented. It is the very garb of a Chriſtian—that wedding-garment, which every one of us *muſt* put on who attends his Lord.

Let us then cloſe with the text—cloſe with it in the fullneſs of our hearts—*Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*—It

is theirs in every ſenſe of the words. Theirs is peace and quietneſs on earth—theirs is that holy diſpoſition, which is the foundation of every Chriſtian virtue—theirs is all the happineſs of this world; and all thoſe joys which are promiſed in the next.

SERMON X.

MAT. V. 13.

YE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

WHAT our Saviour means by *ſalt*, is very plain. As ſalt is a preſervative againſt corruption, whatever corrects the wickedneſs of the world, may be called the *ſalt of the earth*.—This is eaſy; but there is rather a difficulty in aſcertaining to whom the expreſſion is applied. Some think Jeſus ſpoke only to his immediate diſciples; and in them, to the miniſters of the goſpel. Others ſuppoſe, he addreſſed Chriſtians in general. As all Chriſtians, I conceive, may be of uſe to each other in correcting their ſeveral faults, I ſhall take the words in their more enlarged ſenſe: and dividing mankind into *higher* and *lower* ranks, I ſhall *firſt* ſhew you how the former; and, *ſecondly*,

how the latter, are capable of being the *ſalt of the earth.*

We conſider *firſt* the higher ranks. If any of theſe are ſuch unthinking and ungrateful people, as to ſuppoſe God hath placed them in a higher ſtation merely on their own account—or given them a right to ſpend *on themſelves alone* what they enjoy, we argue no longer with them. They muſt ſettle all theſe accounts with God at the laſt great day. But if they have ſuch humility and gratitude to their Almighty Benefactor, as to believe their ſuperior ſtations are given them merely to be of uſe to others, we can then ſpeak to them with confidence.

We are not however now inquiring ſo much into their general diſpoſition to do good, as into the peculiar capacity, which their ſtation gives them, of correcting the morals of thoſe under their influence. This they may effect in three principal ways—by *encouraging religion*—by *reproving wickedneſs*—and by *ſetting a good example.*

When the man of wealth and power ſees an orderly religious family in his neighbourhood, he takes it in a particular manner under his patronage. He does good offices, as he ſees opportunity, ſometimes to one part of the family, and ſometimes

times to another; and though he does not confine his good offices to ſuch people, yet he encourages religion by ſhewing his neighbours that he always makes a diſtinction, in his favours, between good and bad.

Again, in *reproving wickedneſs*, his *diſcountenance* alone will go a great way. He can oblige, and diſoblige ſo many, that numbers look up to him, and are afraid of offending him. It is a melancholy reflection, (but a true one,) that man is often more reſpected than God. Of this, however, the rich man endeavours to avail himſelf, by diſcountenancing wickedneſs.—Among ſuch people as are more nearly connected with him, his reproof has ſtill more the force of authority. "If you do not "leave off ſwearing, or drinking, you and I muſt "part," is a reproof, it is to be feared, that will have a better effect than a text of ſcripture.

But the rich man's *example* qualifies him ſtill more than any thing elſe, for being the *ſalt of earth*. An orderly family, in a great houſe, tends much to diffuſe a ſenſe of order around the neighbourhood. When the heads of a pariſh make a practice of going to church, for inſtance, the lower people commonly lay aſide many excuſes, which might otherwiſe be made for neglecting the ſabbath.

In

In many other caſes, the *example* of a reſpectable family hath its weight. We cannot therefore but regret, that the call of pleaſure carries ſuch numbers to the capital, where that influence is loſt in a croud, which might be extenſively uſeful in a pariſh.

But if the *good example* of the rich and powerful hath not always the effect that might be wiſhed, their *bad example* never fails of having a miſchievous one. The wickedneſs of human nature is always glad of an excuſe; and the example of a ſuperior is generally thought a good one. Every vice, or incorrectneſs of behaviour in him, is multiplied by its effect on others; and how far he may not have the ſins of other people to anſwer for, whom he corrupts by his bad example, is a queſtion I ſhould not undertake to reſolve. Wicked people therefore in high ſtations, inſtead of being the *ſalt of the earth*, are among the very worſt ſources of its corruption.

But the rich and powerful are not the only perſons who are enabled to be the *ſalt of the earth*. Even the loweſt amongſt us may do ſomething towards amending the world. If every one would amend

amend himſelf, nothing more would be wanting. But as that is not to be expected, our Saviour's next rule is, that we ſhould endeavour to amend each other. Let me then point out to you, as I propoſed, *ſecondly*, how the loweſt amongſt us may contribute to this good end.

It will naturally be expected, that a man ſhould firſt have a regard for religion himſelf, before he can induce others to regard it. If he have ſuch a regard, he will naturally deſire, not only to conſort with thoſe who are like himſelf, but one ſhould hope, would wiſh to make all like himſelf with whom he conſorts. But it is too true a remark, that the wicked man is more aſſiduous in corrupting, than the religious man in reforming. Indeed his taſk is ſomewhat eaſier. He has nature on his ſide. The reformer works up-hill.—A few rules however may be of ſervice to him.

In the firſt place, he will endeavour, where he can, to *inſtruct*: and though inſtructing may not be his talent, yet there are opportunities, when moſt good people, however low, may throw in a word of advice. If the heart be really impreſſed with religion, religious ſentiments will as naturally flow from it on every occaſion, as oaths and imprecations from a profane one. And ſome of this

good

good ſeed may, perhaps, now and then, take effect even in an ill-diſpoſed heart. When a poor young fellow is beginning to frequent the ale-houſe —or to neglect the church—or now and then ſwears an oath—before any of theſe bad practices are formed into habits, a little advice from a perſon on an equal footing with himſelf, may ſometimes have more weight than from perſons of more learning and authority. When he, who gives the advice, is in the ſame circumſtances with him who receives it, he is ſuppoſed to know the caſe better, and to ſpeak more from experience. A little advice therefore from ſuch a perſon, may often give a happy turn to a wavering mind, and change its direction. When two roads meet, it depends on a very little matter—merely, you know, on the turn of a bridle, whether the horſeman get right or wrong; and if any good perſon happen to give him a right direction at firſt, he may continue in it to the end of his journey. Thus, by pointing out one road, which led to ruin, and another which led to credit, you may perhaps influence ſome wavering young man to turn to the right, and eſcape the miſchief which would infallibly have met him on the left.

But

But though every one, my neighbours, may not be able to promote religion by *giving advice*, yet every one may certainly promote it by *diſcouraging wickedneſs*. You muſt often, in the courſe of buſineſs, work with bad people, and it cannot be helped. But if you keep your thoughts to yourſelf, and do not join in any of the wickedneſs you ſee, or hear, there is no harm done yet. On other occaſions, I ſhould adviſe you to *keep company*, as little as poſſible, with any one who ſhews a wicked diſpoſition. If all well-diſpoſed people would only go thus far, it would give religion a great advantage. For it is the countenance which wickedneſs meets with—at leaſt the want of that diſcountenance it deſerves, which makes wickedneſs, in theſe days, ſo bold and impudent. You ſee your neighbour, for inſtance, much given to ſwearing and profaneneſs—perhaps to drinking—perhaps to profligate idleneſs, and the neglect of his family—or to ſome other vice. Now, if ſuch people are treated on the common footing of acquaintance, it certainly encourages them in their wickedneſs. They do not find they loſe any ground in the world; and this takes off greatly from the ſhame of vice. But if they ſhould ſee people ſhy of them, and conſider them, while they continue in their wicked

wicked courſes, as accurſed from God, and not fit for the company of ſober Chriſtians, it would make them look about, and think their caſe not quite a deſirable one.

If you were to meet a man infected with the plague, you would fly from him as a perſon dangerous. But in that caſe, you have only one motive—the fear of being infected yourſelf: but in guarding againſt a wicked perſon, who is infected with a ſtill worſe plague, you have two motives for avoiding him. You are not only afraid of being infected yourſelf, but you wiſh alſo to cure him of his infection.

But though in buſineſs, or upon particular occaſions, it may not be in your power to avoid bad people, yet in their *amuſements* they may always be avoided. I ſhould particularly therefore warn you, never to partake with them in any of their diverſions. When you are at work, you are intent on your buſineſs, and there is leſs danger: but in the gaiety of diverſion, the mind is open, and too ready to receive impreſſions from the profane oath, or indecent jeſt. It behoves all, therefore, who wiſh to be the *ſalt of the earth*, to avoid ſuch enſnaring intercourſe.

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There is ſtill one way more, in which a Chriſtian, though in the loweſt ſtation, may be the *ſalt of the earth*; and that is by ſetting a good example.

Now, though a good example in low people does not ſpread ſo wide, as when it is adorned with wealth and power, yet ſtill it will have its effect. There is ſomething ſo pleaſing in a good example, that it draws reſpect even from the wicked. When people ſee others living as they ought to live, who have had no more opportunities than themſelves have had, it makes them (if any thing can make them) aſhamed. It holds a glaſs before them, and by ſhewing them what they ought to be, muſt make them, in ſome degree, think meanly of what they are. Contempt of themſelves may draw on reformation. It will at leaſt be ſome reſtraint on wickedneſs. — I have heard of a little knot of cottages, the inhabitants of which were amongſt the moſt regular and orderly in the whole pariſh. This regularity of behaviour was ſaid to be owing chiefly to an excellent man, a day-labourer, who had long lived among them, and whoſe example, like a good book, was always open before them. From it they learned, that induſtry and frugality turned poverty into plenty—that contentment, rather than

large

large poſſeſſions, produced happineſs—that frequenting the ale-houſe was diſhoneſty to their families—and that the fear of God turned every thing into a bleſſing.—All this they learned chiefly from an amiable example, which brought inſtruction cloſer to the heart than any language could have done.

Thus, my brethren, we may, in our Saviour's language, be the *ſalt of the earth*—by throwing in, as we have opportunity, a little advice—by diſcouraging wickedneſs—by never joining in diverſions with bad people—and by ſetting, on all occaſions, a good example. Now in all this there is nothing, but what every one of you, more or leſs, are enabled to do. For, as our bleſſed Saviour knew what was in man, you cannot ſuppoſe he would give you any advice, which you were not able to follow.—There is one place, however, where there can be no pretence for not following this advice—and that is in your families at home. Parents may at leaſt inſtruct their children, and maſters their ſervants—they may diſcourage wickedneſs among them, and ſet them a good example: and if every one, who has a family, would only do this, it would greatly contribute to purify the world from that maſs of corruption with which

our Saviour's advice ſuppoſes it to be over-ſpread.

Since then, my brethren, we are all, high and low, in ſome degree, qualified to aſſiſt in leſſening this maſs of corruption, by being the *ſalt of the earth*, let us not be backward in doing what we can. If any of you ſhould ſee your neighbour's fences injured, and his corn laid open to treſpaſſing cattle, he would be ready, I doubt not, to give him immediate information; or, perhaps, if he could eaſily do it, would ſee the fence made up himſelf.—This would only be *good neighbourhood.* Turn it into *religion.* What infinitely greater ſervice would you do your neighbour, and at the expence of leſs trouble to yourſelf, by endeavouring as earneſtly to keep ſin from treſpaſſing on his ſoul, as cattle from his field?

Hereafter, my brethren, when all the bleſſed meet in a ſtate of happineſs, what joy will it be to every one, who can ſee among them, any whom he has been inſtrumental in having ſaved from deſtruction. With what pleaſure he may apply to him-

ſelf what the holy apoſtle ſays, *He who converteth a ſinner from the evil of his ways, ſhall ſave a ſoul from death, and ſhall hide a multitude of ſins.*

SERMON XI.

ISAIAH, xxvi. 9.

WHEN THY JUDGMENTS ARE ABROAD IN THE WORLD, THE INHABITANTS OF THE EARTH LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

GOD's judgments, my brethren, *are now* abroad in the world. In many parts the calamities of war and peſtilence are ſeverely felt. God's judgments are ſeverely felt alſo among ourſelves. The critical ſtate of our public affairs is a heavy judgment. The diſtreſs of the poor in this time of dearth, comes ſtill nearer home. Let me then take up the prophet's words, and exhort you all, from the melancholy ſymptoms of the times, to *learn righteouſneſs*. Let me *firſt* addreſs you in general; and, *ſecondly*, the *rich*, and *poor* in *particular*. The admonition belongs to all.

Let us then, *firſt*, my brethren, with gratitude to God, look back on happier times. Happier times we all have known; when God bleſſed us with peace and plenty: when proviſions and labour kept pace with each other.—Such times we all remember: but do we remember our behaviour under theſe bleſſings of Providence? Can we ſay, when God's *bleſſings* were abroad in the world, that we *learned righteouſneſs?* I fear not. Were we thankful to God for his mercies? Did we receive them with that gratitude which leads to a religious life? or did not God's bountiful mercies increaſe our ſins, and tempt us to turn plenty into licentiouſneſs?

As the kindneſs of Providence therefore hath had ſo little effect upon us, what ſhould we naturally expect?—Let us anſwer ourſelves. How ſhould we treat a child, who continued to return our indulgence with diſobedience? We ſhould certainly, if kindneſs had no effect, try harſher meaſures.—And can we not in this, trace the Almighty's behaviour to us? If we will not learn righteouſneſs from his *bleſſings*, we muſt ſurely expect his *judgments*. It is not *juſtice* merely; it is the ſame *kindneſs*, which directs our own ſeverity to an undutiful child.—Let it then, my brethren,

have

have its effect. If we regard not God's *mercies*, let us at leaſt ſtand in awe of his *judgments*—let them teach us to obey his laws—to truſt in him for our ſupport—to conſider this world, and all its afflictions, as our trial—and look up to heaven for our reward.

Thus far the text applies to us *in general*. We all want the *judgments* of God—or, at leaſt his correcting hand in ſome ſhape, to draw us to our duty.—But now, my brethren, in this time of diſtreſs, there are *particular*, as well as *general* duties: the *rich* have their peculiar duties, and the *poor* have theirs. Let us firſt reaſon a little with the *rich*.

The firſt great queſtion is, By what tenure do you hold your poſſeſſions?

You anſwer, by the laws of the land. You have received your property by inheritance; or you have gained it by your own induſtry; and the laws of the land ſecure you in the poſſeſſion of it.

It is true, my friend, the laws of the land ſecure you from the violence of bad men. They leave you alſo at liberty to ſpend your property as you pleaſe. You may hoard it—or you may ſquander it. With all this the law does not interfere.—But

you ſurely miſtake the matter greatly, if you ſuppoſe the law of the land is the real tenure, by which you hold your poſſeſſions. You do not ſurely exclude God Almighty; but conſider him as Lord Paramount. You muſt not therefore, in the pride of your heart, conſider yourſelf as the *real proprietor* of what you poſſeſs. God knows, that at beſt you are only a *poor tenant at will.*— You remember, perhaps, the ſtory of the rich landlord, *whoſe grounds brought forth plenteouſly.* He filled his barns with their produce, and as corn did not yet bear a price that invited him to ſell, he ſatisfied himſelf with glorying in his future proſpects. He was fully ſecured by the laws of the land, which was all the ſecurity he wiſhed, and thought of nothing now but of plenty and happineſs. Poor wretch! having not taken the great Lord, under whom he held, into the queſtion, he was ſuddenly diſmiſſed from his poſſeſſions, with this ſhort ſentence, *Thou fool! this night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee* *.

This point then being acknowledged, that God Almighty is the great proprietor of all we enjoy, the next queſtion is, on what terms do we hold

* Luke, xii. 16.

our

our poſſeſſions under him? The rich man cannot be ſo abſurd as to ſuppoſe, God gives *him* more than he gives to *others*, merely for *his own ſake*: or, what is the ſame thing, that God gives him, for his own ſake, the means and opportunities through which he acquires more? Does he ſuppoſe that God Almighty has a greater regard for him, becauſe he is rich, than for the pooreſt man in the pariſh? Not in the leaſt, he may be aſſured. God's favour does not follow riches, but goodneſs.—His own merit therefore being ſet aſide, it follows, that ſome better reaſon ſhould be aſſigned by the rich man, for the peculiar favour which God beſtows on him. Let us examine the matter.

God, like other Lords paramount, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, preſcribes to his tenants certain conditions, by which they hold their ſeveral grants or leaſes; under which the world, like a great eſtate, is let out, as it were, in farms of different value. Theſe are our different ſtations in life, without which the world could no more ſubſiſt, than a country, if all the property of it were in one hand. The world, therefore, muſt conſiſt both of rich and poor. This inequality however God equalizes, by appointing the rich his ſtewards, with ſtrict injunctions to attend to the neceſſities of

the poor, and not only to give them wages for their labour, but to be watchful to prevent their wants. And though God Almighty does not always call his ſtewards to ſo ſhort an account, as the ſtewards of this world are ſometimes called, but gives them opportunity to repent—yet undoubtedly a time will come, when every rich man muſt give an account of his ſtewardſhip, when his fidelity in his truſt will be examined, and he ſhall be told, *he muſt be no longer ſteward.* It is diſhoneſty to God, if he do not ſpend what God gives him, in the manner in which God directs. And ſurely it is as great a piece of knavery to defraud God, as to cheat man. As certainly therefore as the laws of the land will puniſh one kind of diſhoneſty, the laws of the goſpel will puniſh the other. The laws of the land may be evaded; but the laws of the goſpel never can.

This is a doctrine, however, which the rich man is little inclined to hear. He values his title to his eſtate from man much more than his title to it from God; and is readier on all occaſions to conſult his lawyer, than his bible. The great ſtatute-book, which preſcribes the conditions of his tenure, may ſtate, *What haſt thou that thou didſt not receive? and if thou didſt receive it, why doſt thou*

thou actest if thou hadst not received it? Alas! ſo far is the rich man from acknowledging the conditions of his leaſe, that he ſeldom acknowledges even the very title of his great landlord who lets it to him.—As to the man who has gained his affluence by rapine, fraud, or knavery of any kind, he indeed receives nothing from God. He receives wages from another maſter; and while he continues in his ſervice, to that maſter we muſt refer him for a recompence.

But now, my brethren, in times of ſcarcity, (I ſpeak now to ſuch rich men as acknowledge their heavenly allegiance,) God expects more from his ſtewards of all denominations, than this *general benevolence*. Every man ſhould give in proportion to the property which God hath intruſted to him; but no man is ſo loudly called on to this charitable office as the land-holder. Others give out of their *income*; the land-holder out of his *profit*. He who gets more than double a ſaving profit from his corn, may well afford to let a few of his needy neighbours have a morſel from his granaries. Corn brought to a market, muſt be ſold at a market price. But as it is high, and beyond the reach of the poor, the compaſſionate land-holder ſhould give up a little of his profit, in gratitude to that God,

who

who has given him ſo much.—Even letting the poor have a *ſmall* quantity at a *full price*, would be ſome advantage. They could mix it with other grain, and get their bread cheaper than by going to the ſhop: but this cannot always be had. The load is often ſo exactly made up, that not a buſhel remains.

But ſtill farther: the land-holder ſhould conſider, that whether he hold his lands under God; or, as he perhaps rather puts it, under the law, in both caſes he holds them merely for the *ſake of furniſhing food*. Men have various ſtations, and various appointments: the only uſe of *land* is to furniſh *food for the country*. The poſſeſſor holds it then merely for this very purpoſe; and, in fact, is as much bound in juſtice—*in ſtrict juſtice*—to conſider his land in this light, as the labourer is to plough and dig for his wages. When a harveſt fails, corn will naturally bear a higher price; and no one can murmur. The reaſonable profit of one year may be proper to anſwer the bad returns of another. But if tricks and arts be uſed by the land-holder to make the price enormous—if his end be to *feed the market*, inſtead of *feeding the country*—I fear he is a fraudulent dealer; and we may with too much juſtice apply to him the ſcriptural deprecation, *He*

that

that withholdeth his corn, the people ſhall curſe him; but bleſſing ſhall be upon the head of him who ſelleth it *. Nor alone will the *people curſe him;* he muſt remember that his knavery has ſtill another ſentence to undergo.

Some *hoarder of corn*, or *feeder of the market*, may perhaps ſay, I am obliged to uſe theſe arts. My taxes are high, and I muſt make myſelf whole by the ſale of my corn. It has been ſaid. But pray, my friend, are not every body's taxes equally high? Is it not for your own ſecurity you pay your taxes? and are not you bleſſed with a ſecurity, which hardly any nation, beſides ourſelves enjoy? Will you then make the poor pay for your ſecurity? Will you add to their diſtreſſes, by grinding *their faces*, to make them pay *your taxes?*—God protect them from ſuch hardened avarice!

I have only one point more to ſettle with the rich—and that is, with regard to ſumptuous and expenſive entertainments, in which much, no doubt, is waſted, and much conſumed in palatable diſhes, which might have given neceſſaries to the poor. No occaſion, even the moſt public, can apologize for ſuch waſte. But in private families,

* Prov. xi. 26.

if an entertainment go beyond the plaineſt repaſt—if it lead to vying in expence—if it occaſion any waſte of victuals—or any oſtentatious prodigality—it may be called (without any long deduction of inferences,) *injuſtice* to the poor. It is alſo inſulting them; the compariſon between *feaſting* and *ſtarving* is cruelly held out.

This idea is ſtrongly characterized in a rich man of ancient time, who is chronicled for *faring ſumptuouſly every day*, and paying no regard to the poor. Let the beggar lie ſtarving at my gate, he would ſay; if my board be plentifully ſupplied within, I leave him to the compaſſion of my dogs. Time ran on. The rich man continued to *fare ſumptuouſly*, and the beggar to *ſtarve*.—At length the day of reckoning came. The rich man died. All his *ſumptuous* fare was now at an end. His melancholy note now was, *Give me a drop of cold water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.*—In this affecting relation, our bleſſed Saviour gives all rich men a leſſon, which they ſhould never forget. It is a fable indeed; but the moral is an aweful truth.

In the time of ſcarcity, however, it is not enough to repreſs the luxuries of the table. Such moderation indeed will give propriety to a meal in the eye

eye of the world; but to make it charity in the eye of heaven, the expence of all the overplus ſhould be given to the poor.

Thus far to the *rich*. To the *poor*, it is ſomewhat more difficult to ſpeak. To thoſe in abundant circumſtances we are not ſo fearful of giving pain. They have their mitigating reſources. But penury requires pity. In the time of dearth, the poor man is always the greateſt ſufferer.—At the ſame time, the poor man muſt conſider, that his wickedneſs will be a great addition to the calamities he ſuffers. If the *poor* man be a *wicked* man, I know not where to ſend him for conſolation. In theſe ſevere times the diſtreſſes he feels are only the juſt puniſhment of his ſins.—He increaſes them alſo by fretfulneſs, and repining at calamities ſent by God, which no human power, much leſs his repining, can prevent.—Too often likewiſe he brings miſchief on himſelf by joining in riotous bodies. Such diſturbances cannot leſſen a ſcarcity, but they may increaſe it.—Like a highway robbery, they may procure a preſent relief; but depend upon it, the miſchief will always exceed the advantage.

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To ſuch poor as I have been deſcribing, no conſolation can well be given. But to thoſe patient ſufferers, who are truly God's ſervants, I hope, we may ſpeak a more comfortable language. Receive with meek reſignation God's holy will. The times are hard: no doubt they are. But it is God's will to make them ſo; and it is impoſſible for you to make them otherwiſe by oppoſing his will. On the other hand, by reſigning yourſelf to it, you may make them better. When you reſign yourſelf to God's will, you make the act partly your own; and ſo far as you ſuffer voluntarily, you make the ſuffering eaſier. But when you oppoſe God's will, by repining at it, you add the uneaſy fretfulneſs of your own temper to what you are obliged to ſuffer.—Be of good cheer, therefore. Make God your friend, and you are in hands that will never forſake you.—Be quiet and peaceable—induſtrious and frugal—truſt in God, and endeavour to pleaſe him; and you may hope for his protecting care even in the time of dearth. He who provided a table in the wilderneſs—he who fed Jacob and his family in the day of famine—will, I truſt, raiſe you up friends, who will ſecure you at leaſt from the diſtreſs of want.

Let us then all, my brethren, rich and poor, attend ſeriouſly to the admonition of the text. *When God's judgments are abroad in the world, let us learn righteouſneſs.* Theſe times of ſcarcity afford means of trial to us all. The rich, in whatever way God hath bleſſed them, are called upon for their utmoſt charity and aſſiſtance to the poor. It is the office aſſigned them. In the very beautiful and expreſſive language of the prophet, they ſhould *draw out their ſouls to the hungry* *.——The poor again are called on for quietneſs—for patience—for gratitude to their friends—and above all, for truſt in God.

Let us all then, in our reſpective ſtations do our duty, and we ſhall at leaſt alleviate the diſtreſſes of the times. We ſhall have a friend, who can occaſionally do wonders for his faithful ſervants. He can prevent the *barrel of meal from waſting*, and the *cruiſe of oil from failing* †, till he ſend in his goodneſs more plentiful times.

On the other hand, ſevere as the preſent diſtreſs is, if we do not avert God's wrath, it may only yet be the *beginning of ſorrows*. This nation may,

* Iſaiah, lviii. 19. † 1 Kings, xvii. 14.

like

like many others, be over-run with our enemies, however ſecure we may think ourſelves from the ſituation of our country, and our triumphant fleets—Or the plague, as in many other nations, at this time, may break out amongſt us—Or the ſcarcity we now feel, may increaſe ſtill farther to a famine. Events, which at firſt appear of little conſequence, by degrees become evils of magnitude. The war, in which we are now engaged, was thought of little moment when it firſt broke out. We have had a train of naval victories ſince that time, but we are ſtill ſo involved in this pernicious war, that we ſee not how it may end: —and yet it *may* be ſuddenly ended at once, by ſome trivial unexpected event. With God it is nothing to *ſave with many, or with few.*—In the ſame way the preſent ſcarcity may be alleviated, and the poor ſupplied with food in a manner, which we do not now foreſee. In the mean time, let us endeavour to pleaſe God, and avert his judgments by amending our lives. If we are good, I truſt we ſhall ſee happier times: if we continue ſtill farther to provoke God by our wicked lives, it may be feared, (as our Saviour threatened the cripple at Bethesda,) *that a worſe thing may come upon us.*

SERMON XII.

I COR. xiii. 13.

AND NOW ABIDETH FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY, THESE THREE; BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY.

WE do not often, I believe, find in ſcripture one virtue ſet above another. The authority of God, on which they all reſt, in ſome degree equalizes them. It was under ſome idea of, this kind, that an inquiring lawyer aſked our Saviour, which was the great commandment? Our Saviour mentioned the *firſt*: but immediately ſubjoined, that *the ſecond was like* unto it; and that equally on theſe two depended all the law and the prophets. Yet, if he meant to give the great commandment, at the head of the de-

calogue, a diſtinguiſhed place, it is only an exception we might expect.

Notwithſtanding however this general idea of equality, we find in the paſſage I have juſt read to you, three Chriſtian virtues compared, and one of them placed in a higher rank than the other twō.

This is rather ſingular, as it does not obviouſly appear, why *charity* ſhould be placed before *faith* and *hope*. I ſhall endeavour therefore to explain the difficulty.—I ſhall *firſt* examine the three virtues of *faith*, *hope*, and *charity* apart. I ſhall, *ſecondly*, endeavour to point out a reaſon for the apoſtle's giving a preference to the laſt: and, *thirdly*, draw a concluſion from the whole.

With regard to *faith*, ſome people include in it the whole range of duty both to God and man. And this is very true: for as all virtues may flow from it, they may all be ſaid to be included in it. In this ſenſe, no doubt, every good Chriſtian will ſubſcribe to *faith*, as the *ſum of religion*. But it certainly is not always taken in this enlarged ſenſe. St. Paul may ſometimes, in a conciſe argument, conſider faith as another word for Chriſtianity: but in various paſſages, and particularly in the paſſage

paſſage before us, it ſeems not to be conſidered in this comprehenſive light, but as a ſimple act, ſtript of all its adjuncts, and means only a belief in the life and death of Chriſt, and the great work of redemption. This is ſometimes called a mere *hiſtorical faith*: and if it proceed no farther, it deſerves a ſtigma. But the Chriſtian life, as well as the natural life, muſt have its firſt principle, or beginning; and *hiſtorical faith*, if it muſt be ſo called, is that firſt principle.

This ſeems to be the idea which is adopted in our church-creeds. In them we are taught, that the Chriſtian's faith conſiſts in believing the circumſtances of the life and death of our Saviour, and in the work of redemption. Chriſtian virtues, no doubt, are ſuppoſed to follow this faith. All I mean is, that our public creeds ſuppoſe the *faith of a Chriſtian* to originate from *ſcriptural evidence*.

But we are ſometimes told, that faith is the immediate work of God—that it is impreſſed inſtantaneouſly by divine inſpiration on the heart.

If ſo, it wants no evidence—Nor was it neceſſary, that our bleſſed Saviour ſhould *inculcate* what was *ſpontaneouſly* given.

Without God's aſſiſtance, every good Chriſtian muſt allow, we can do nothing. We can no more be religious without it, than we can breathe or move without it. But in all theſe things, our own endeavours muſt co-operate. He who ſhould ſit down with his arms and legs folded, waiting till God ſhould put him in motion, would be ridiculous; and he, who ſhould walk about, and ſay, I move without any aſſiſtance from God, would be impious. It is juſt ſo in faith. He who ſhould ſay, my own good works will do nothing for me, faith is all, ſeems to me an enthuſiaſt: and he who ſhould ſay, my own good works are all I want, is certainly not a Chriſtian.

We conclude therefore from the whole, that although faith is *ſometimes conſidered in an extenſive ſenſe*, as comprehending *all Chriſtian virtues*, it is ſometimes conſidered *ſimply in itſelf*, as grounded merely on *evidence*, and implying nothing more than a *belief* in Jeſus Chriſt. In this ſenſe I ſuppoſe the word *faith* is conſidered in the paſſage before us. It cannot be ſuppoſed to include every virtue, for then it would include *charity*, from which it is plainly diſtinguiſhed.

Hope

Hope is the next virtue we examine. Now hope, ſimply conſidered, is no virtue at all. I deſire to obtain an advantage. I uſe the beſt means in my power; and I *hope* they will ſucceed. But there is nothing here that denominates hope to be virtuous. It is its connection with heaven that gives *hope* a religious value.

It is ſo in other virtues. Men have only one ſet of moral qualities: but they differ in value, according to the end they have in view, and the motive that governs them. I am grateful to my benefactor. The affection is amiable. But when my gratitude looks up to God, it is of a much more purified and exalted nature. It is grounded on my truſt in an inviſible Creator.—I believe what *my friend tells me*. There is not much in that. But when I believe what *God tells me*, my belief becomes religious faith, and God is pleaſed *to accept it for righteouſneſs*.

It is ſo in *hope*. Though there is nothing valuable in my hoping for any earthly good, which I think it probable may arrive; yet when I transfer that hope to heaven, it takes a religious caſt, and becomes a virtue. My earthly hope is grounded on nothing perhaps but my own prudence, and

may be reſolved into mere ſelfiſhneſs; and if there is no harm in it, there is certainly no good. But my heavenly hope reſts on my truſt in an inviſible God, who has promiſed me certain bleſſings, if I endeavour to perform the conditions required; which promiſes therefore, on his word, I humbly hope for.—Faith and hope are thus immediately connected; and thus connected it is, that *hope* becomes the anchor of the ſoul.

We next conſider *charity*. As this virtue is here exalted ſo highly, many commentators have conceived, that it is meant to include both the love of God and man. But if St. Paul knew his own meaning, this could not be the caſe: for in the various lights in which charity is placed in the chapter, from which the text is taken, there is not one which does not tend to confine it to our neighbour. By charity therefore, as deſcribed by the apoſtle, we underſtand, that *general affection*, which prompts us to avoid every thing that can injure or diſtreſs another, and do every thing which can contribute to his happineſs. In ſhort, it is Chriſtian benevolence.

Having

Having thus conſidered the meaning, which I humbly conceive the apoſtle affixed to the words *faith*, *hope*, and *charity*, let us, *ſecondly*, conſider his *argument*, and ſhew why he places *charity* ſo much above the other two.

In the 12th chapter he had been reproving his Corinthian converts for that faulty zeal with which they had exerciſed their ſpiritual gifts. At the concluſion he tells them, he would ſhew them a way of proceeding much more conformable to the ſpirit of the goſpel. With this view he ſpends the whole 13th chapter in explaining the nature of charity, which he conſiders, as his argument led, entirely in the light of benevolence to our neighbour. He conſiders its *nature* and its *excellence*. It muſt accompany, he tells his converts, all their ſpiritual gifts: for though, as it appears, they might exerciſe thoſe ſpiritual gifts without it *, yet it was impoſſible, that gifts ſo exerciſed, could either be of value in themſelves, or pleaſing to God.

* Thus Balaam exerciſed the functions of a prophet, though he was a bad man: and we are led to believe, from the tenor of the evangelical writings, that Judas Iſcariot wrought miracles, as well as the other apoſtles.

Among other things, which the apoſtle urges in favour of *charity*, he ſpeaks of its eternal nature. All the ſpiritual gifts, he tells his converts, with which they were endowed, were calculated only for this world. Prophecy ſhall be compleated, and at an end—various languages, no longer neceſſary, ſhall ceaſe—the knowledge to be acquired in this imperfect ſtate, will be of no uſe. But charity never fails. It commences on earth, and continues with us in heaven. There it is exalted beyond what this world will allow. It becomes celeſtial love, and unites in praiſe to the Creator, with the bleſſed inhabitants of thoſe regions of everlaſting happineſs.

It is from this eternal nature of *charity* the apoſtle, in a great degree, infers its ſuperiority to *faith* and *hope*. In *this world*, ſays he, *we exerciſe* * the three great virtues of *faith*, *hope*, and *charity*. But the two former of theſe loſing their end, and even their exiſtence, after our removal into another world; *charity*, which laſts for ever, is therefore of a nature ſuperior to both.

* Νυνι δε μενει.

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The great concluſion to be drawn from the whole, which was my *laſt* head, is to conſider faith, and charity, or good works in their proper light. Faith, no doubt, is the foundation of all religion; and, when firmly eſtabliſhed, good works will naturally follow.—But it muſt be conſidered, that faith is thus a *mean* not an *end*. The goſpel was intended to purify our nature, and make up the deficiencies of the fall. The whole ſcripture therefore, from one end to the other, exhorts us to good works, through faith in Chriſt. A heathen may be ſaved, we ſuppoſe, without faith: but no man was ever ſaved, ſo far as we are allowed to judge, without good works. Laying a ſtreſs upon theſe works, and thinking we merit heaven by them, is a different idea, and cannot be too much diſcouraged.

At the ſame time, I think, we ſhould be cautious how we lay the *chief ſtreſs* on faith, and leave good works to *follow as they may*. Though this doctrine cannot miſlead exalted minds; yet I fear it is a dangerous doctrine for common hearers, and liable to much miſconception and ſelf-deceit. There may be many, who profeſſing they have faith, which they conſider as a juſtifying

principle, are ſometimes, perhaps, rather lax with regard to good works.—In ſhort, though faith, when explained in its full latitude, is the moſt valuable doctrine of Chriſtianity; yet when it is held in all its excluſive ſtrictneſs, it ſeems, I think, to contradict the tenor of ſcripture, and appears to oppoſe that ſuperiority given by the apoſtle in the text to *charity*, which is every where repreſented as *the end of the commandment*.

THE Author having conſidered in this, and the two former volumes, a variety of religious topics, concludes the whole with a ſhort comprehenſive ſketch of Chriſtianity in one view. He conſiders,

I.

The connection between the fall of man, and the revelation of the goſpel.

II^ly.

The preparation neceſſary for the reception of the goſpel.

III^ly.

The truth of ſcripture.

IV^l.y.

The proof of our Saviour's miſſion from miracles and prophecy.

V^ly.

The preciſe difference between Chriſtianity and the moral law.

VI^ly. *The*

VI^ly.

The general deſign of Chriſtianity.

VII^ly.

The conditions required of Chriſtians—faith—repentance.

VIII^ly.

Forgiveneſs of injuries—reſtitution, and advancement in Chriſtian perfection.

IX^ly.

The promiſes of the goſpel.

X^ly.

The threatenings of the goſpel.

XI^ly.

The ſacraments.

XII^ly.

Recapitulation of the whole.

The laſt ſermon, No. XXV. *is ſo cloſely connected with the ſubject of the foregoing twelve ſermons, that the author prints it as a concluding diſcourſe.*

SERMON XIII.

I COR. XV. 22.

I. FOR AS IN ADAM ALL DIE, EVEN SO IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE.

WHEN we look round the world, we cannot but diſcover in it many marks of imperfection. The earth produces corn and fruits with labour: but it teams of its own accord with weeds and noxious herbs.—The air is the ſeat of ſtorms and blaſting winds; and the ocean often overflows its bounds.

In the brute creation we find the ſame marks of imperfection. The whole ſtate of animal life is a ſtate of rapine and bloodſhed. One half of it preys upon the other.

Nor have we fewer marks of imperfection when we examine mankind, furniſhed, as we are, with reaſon.

reaſon. We all know enough, to be aſſured, we have within us a conſtant inclination to evil, to which our appetites and paſſions are continually tending.

Now, on conſidering all this imperfection, it appears probable at ſight, that the earth and its inhabitants are in ſome fallen ſtate.

The great queſtion therefore is, How things came into this ſtate? Whence is it, that God's creation here, ſo fair in many reſpects, ſhould in others be ſo deformed? Did God create evil? Did he make a bad world, and ſtock it with bad inhabitants, for no other purpoſe but to make them miſerable?

Alas! theſe queſtions have puzzled the wiſdom of all mankind. The ancient heathen plainly ſaw the difficulty, and endeavoured to ſolve it; but in no way that was ſatisfactory to himſelf. He ſaw how inconſiſtent it was with the goodneſs of God to *create evil:* but it was not in the power of human reaſon to explain the myſtery.

Thanks be to revelation, we are better taught. A book is put into *our* hands—the word of God—which explains theſe things. Here we find, this world was not originally formed in the ſtate in which we now ſee it—it was formed originally in

in a ſtate of perfection—it produced its fruits without labour—and man was created in a ſtate of innocence and happineſs. Unconſcious of guilt, he met his Creator with aſſurance face to face.

The ſacred ſtory proceeds to inform us of that fatal act of diſobedience which the firſt man committed. It matters not in what his trial conſiſted. The *act of diſobedience* was the offence.

Some have treated the Moſaic account of the fall with diſreſpect. But let us be ſatisfied with it, till we get a better—till we get one more conſiſtent with the *moral* and *natural* ſtate of what we obſerve at preſent in the world *.—As to the agency of the devil, we are utterly ignorant of the power of evil ſpirits—we are ignorant how far they were permitted *then*, or how far they are permitted *even now*, to tempt mankind.—And as to the prohibition of the fruit of a tree, which ſome call trifling, who dare affirm, that a more proper one could have been ſuited to

* It ſeems no improbable conjecture, in anſwer to thoſe, who object to the ſhort period of a paradiſaical ſtate, that God might chuſe to open the new world, meant to be a ſtate of trial, with a melancholy event, which, like a table of contents to a book, might ſhew the fatal effects of diſobedience. As to Adam, no doubt, his will was free, but God made uſe of *his* diſobedience, as he does of *ours*, to bring about his own wiſe purpoſes.

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the condition of man, placed, as God was pleaſed to place Adam, in a ſtate of trial. It was a ſtate of trial, no doubt: but very different from ours. All that mode of trial, which ariſes from an intercourſe with ſociety was excluded.—But we are apt to judge of things by our *own times*. If we could enter fully into the idea of Adam's ſtate, we might perhaps ſee, that no kind of trial could have been ſo proper.—Be the prohibition however what it would, man, by his diſobedience, loſt his own happy ſtate, and entailed the miſchief on his poſterity, though it does not appear that he had any at that time;—as parents, we ſee, now by their wickedneſs often entail diſeaſes, infamy, and beggary on their children. It is a courſe of nature, which God hath appointed as a check to wickedneſs.

By this ſad event death entered into the world: *in Adam all die*; and the world itſelf became a ſcene proper for ſuch an inhabitant as man. It was made neceſſary for him to procure his daily bread by labour, and at an allotted period to mingle again with the duſt.—But this was not all: Had mere temporal death been the worſt a man could ſuffer, the conſequence had been leſs deplorable. But he had an immortal ſoul within him,

him, which could not lie down, like his body in the grave; and how immortality was to be regained was the great point *.

Now this is juſt the bible hiſtory of the entrance of ſin and death into the world. It is a plain account, evidenced by the preſent ſtate of things; and ſhews at once, what none of the philoſophers, with all their wiſdom, could find out—that evil was not of God's ſending, but of man's own bringing in: it ſhews us how man became a ſinful creature, and threw himſelf, by his own fault, out of God's favour.

And indeed this is the only hiſtory of our wicked world that is at all conſiſtent. We ſee it in a depraved ſtate. We aſk how it came to be ſo? Nobody can give us an account in any degree ſatisfactory, till we open the word of God. There the fatal ſtory is recorded. There we learn, in few words, that *in Adam all die.*

* I think it appears from various parts of ſcripture, that the death threatened to Adam was ſpiritual, not temporal. *As in Adam*, ſays the text, *all die*; *ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.* But how? Not in this world, for we ſee men are here ſtill ſubject to death. It muſt therefore mean a ſpiritual death; and on this ſenſe the grand ſcheme of redemption is a comment. *We lay hold of eternal life* as *the gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt.*

The next great queſtion is, in this diſtreſſed ſituation of things, what was to be done? Man could not help *himſelf*.—One ſhould think then, it was agreeable to the infinite goodneſs of God to afford him ſome aſſiſtance. A reſtoring power, in many inſtances, pervades all nature; and one ſhould ſuppoſe, that in a peculiar manner it would be reached out to man. Without *ſome* aſſiſtance he was loſt for ever.

That aſſiſtance God graciouſly afforded through Jeſus Chriſt. *As in Adam all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.* The goſpel was intended as the grand reſtoration of mankind. It makes man acquainted with the nature of God. Inſtead of that variety of gods, which were before worſhipped, the majeſty of one divine almighty Creator is now diſplayed, cloathed with juſtice and mercy, tempering each other—a God, not like what the heathen conceived, unconcerned at human events, but preſent to all our actions, intimate with all our thoughts, *about our bed, about our path, and ſpying out all our ways.*

With juſt conceptions of God, the Chriſtian religion introduces alſo a rational worſhip of him. Inſtead of lifeleſs forms and ceremonies, it enjoins

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its diſciples to worſhip the God of heaven *in ſpirit and in truth.* Man is permitted to open his wants to his heavenly Father. Prayer is conſidered as one of the gracious means of intercourſe between God and man. It is the means of inſtruction alſo. It fills the mind with pious ſentiments; and, while we ſupplicate God's bleſſing, contributes to render us more worthy of it.

In the government of our lives the goſpel is as kind a director. Man is no longer left to wander in error, or to walk by the doubtful light of his own reaſon. His way is plainly marked out, and every kind aſſiſtance to lead him on his road is afforded. The aim of his life has a higher direction. A future ſtate is opened to his view; and the great neceſſity of a good life to qualify him for that ſtate, is ſet before him in the ſtrongeſt light.

To ſtrengthen his endeavours, he is farther aſſured, that if thoſe endeavours are ſincere, he ſhall be aſſiſted by the holy ſpirit of God.

With theſe aids, he is taught to look on this world only as a ſtate of preparation. Heaven is his great home, and this world only the road which leads to it. As he his ſhewn the unworthineſs of his nature, he is ſhewn alſo the dignity of it. Though *born in ſin, and the child of wrath,*

by his new birth in Chriſt, he becomes allied to angels and archangels, the heir of God, and *joint heir with Chriſt.*

But unleſs one ſtep farther had been taken in his favour, all would have been ineffectual. He had his duty indeed plainly pointed out, but he could not live up to it, and yet had no ground to expect pardon for his tranſgreſſions. The principal end therefore of Chriſt's coming, was to obtain pardon for him by laying down his life; and to reſtore him by that great atonement, if he ſhould not be wanting to himſelf, to thoſe heavenly hopes, which by the tranſgreſſion of Adam he had loſt.

Theſe are the great events which peculiarly diſtinguiſh the goſpel. Of theſe things the heathen had no idea. They offered indeed in ſacrifice the lives of animals, and hoped to appeaſe the anger of their gods, by ſhedding the innocent blood of beaſts; which ſhewed at leaſt, that they had ideas of atonement for ſin: but their beſt hopes were mixed with all the fears and doubts of ſuperſtition. *The blood of bulls and of goats*, as the apoſtle argues, *could not take away ſin.* They were yet unacquainted with that great ſacrifice, which made an all-ſufficient atonement for the ſins of mankind.

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This great doctrine is a ſtumbling-block to all who ſet up their own reaſon againſt revelation. But as it is a doctrine plainly revealed in ſcripture, though not explained, we muſt either receive it by an act of faith, myſterious as it is, or give up revelation and ſcripture altogether.

I ſhall conclude this general view of the fall and reſtoration of man, with two or three obſervations.

In the firſt place, we ſhould conſider ourſelves as ſinful creatures—*naturally* depraved, and without any hope from ourſelves of a happy immortality. Unleſs we *feel* our ſituation, we cannot deſire to amend it.

With the ſenſe therefore about us of our loſt condition, the next object of our contemplation ſhould be God's gracious means of reſtoring us through Chriſt.

And laſtly, and moſt eſpecially, we ſhould do our parts in obtaining this reſtoration. Let us not ſuppoſe we may enjoy the light of Chriſtians, and lead the lives of heathen. To be Chriſtians, we muſt live like Chriſtians. It is not the name of Chriſtian that will ſave us. Chriſt died to redeem

thoſe only, who forſake their ſins, who change their *hearts*, and become *new creatures* through the influence of his goſpel. In that day, no doubt, many a heathen will ſtand juſtified in the ſight of God; while many nominal Chriſtian ſhall be caſt out. In vain may they cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us.* Do we not bear thy name? Do we not acknowledge thy authority?—Hear what the voice, even the gracious Jeſus returns, *I know you not—depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.*

SERMON XIV.

GAL. iii. 24.

II. THE LAW WAS OUR SCHOOLMASTER TO BRING US TO CHRIST.

IN my laſt diſcourſe I gave you a general idea of mankind in their loſt, and in their reſtored ſtate. I ſhould now proceed to examine the authority on which the goſpel is founded—the obligations it lays upon us, and the promiſes and threatenings by which it enforces theſe obligations. But before we enter on theſe points, let us firſt enquire into thoſe *means of preparation*, which the Almighty took to introduce it, *firſt* to the Jews, and *afterwards* to mankind in general. As it was a religion intended for the world, God thought proper to prepare the world

for it *. Let us then trace the ſeveral means by which this great preparation was brought about.

The principal of them are, in few words, pointed out in the text: *The law was our ſchoolmaſter to bring us to Chriſt*—that is, the patriarchal religion, and after it the Jewiſh, were the great inſtruments, which God employed to introduce the goſpel.

The patriarch Abraham, the father of the Jewiſh people, had an early intimation given him of God's gracious deſign. He was informed, that *in him all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed.* Some other ſingular incidents we meet with in his hiſtory, particularly the command given him to ſacrifice his only ſon. Though withheld from the act, he could not but conceive ſomething very extraordinary and prophetic in the command, and probably ſaw in it a repreſentation of that great event, which was afterwards to take place on that very

* Some ſuppoſe the Jewiſh polity to have been eſtabliſhed and conducted, merely to preſerve a *knowledge of the true God in the world.* (See Biſhop Watſon's Apology for the Bible, pages 120. 210.) This, no doubt, was one end of its inſtitution; but the grand end ſeems to have been to introduce Chriſtianity. The text tells us plainly, that *the law was our ſchoolmaſter to bring us to Chriſt*; of whom the whole Jewiſh ritual indeed was typical.

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ſpot, Mount Moriah, where Iſaac was laid upon the altar. To this patriarch alſo the rich country of Canaan was promiſed as a *land of reſt*; and we are aſſured by St. Paul, that he ſaw it, not merely as an earthly inheritance, but as figuring out a *city which hath foundation, whoſe builder and maker is God.*

To the ſecond patriarch of this family the promiſe of a land of *reſt* was renewed; and likewiſe that greater promiſe, that *all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed in him.*

The third patriarch, Jacob, received the promiſe likewiſe of a place of *reſt* from all the wanderings of his family; and alſo that hereditary promiſe, which was now a third time repeated, that in his family *all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed.*—This patriarch likewiſe ſaw in a viſion, a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and angels aſcending and deſcending upon it, which he could not but interpret as a type of ſome future communication, which was afterwards to be opened between heaven and earth.

This laſt patriarch, and his family, being driven from home by a famine, ſettled in Egypt, where their deſcendants ſuffered a grievous ſervitude, till Moſes, with a mighty hand, under God, re-

deemed them from a bondage, which was evidently a type of that greater bondage, from which Chriſt afterwards redeemed mankind.

When they left Egypt, the old type of wandering through a wilderneſs in ſearch of a promiſed land, was again held out; and during theſe travels a variety of circumſtances pointed out thoſe ideas, which were afterwards realized in the goſpel.—Such were the *brazen ſerpent*, the manna from heaven, and the ſtream of water ſtruck from a rock; which rock, the apoſtle tells us, was an emblem of Chriſt *.

The Jews having at length taken poſſeſſion of Canaan, and their church having obtained a legal eſtabliſhment, almoſt the whole ſcheme of their religion became now a ſucceſſion of rites and ceremonies, typical of goſpel-times.

Sacrifices were types of early inſtitution prevailing in every part of the earth. But at Jeruſalem this rite appeared in its moſt ſignificant form. Here it was branched into a variety of different kinds, each of which alluded to ſome part of that great atonement, which was afterwards made by Chriſt: ſuch were the ſin-offering, the peace-offering, and

* 1 Cor. x, 4.

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the ſprinkling of the blood towards the mercy-ſeat.—The real meaning of all theſe religious appointments, could not be hid from the wiſer Jews, eſpecially when illuſtrated by the prophets. They ſaw, with David, that *ſacrifices and burnt-offerings, and offerings for ſin, for their own ſake, God required not: but a body he had prepared.* This can have no conſiſtent meaning, if it do not allude to that great atonement hereafter to be made by the body of Chriſt.

How remarkable alſo was the ſcape-goat, which the prieſt turned looſe into the wilderneſs, after having confeſſed over it the ſins of the people.

What, again, was the inſtitution of the paſſover, but a direct ſetting forth of the Lord's death till he ſhould come? the lamb was to be without ſpot or blemiſh: not a bone of it was to be broken.

The vail of the temple, which ſeparated the holy of holies from the more common parts of the building, was likewiſe a very remarkable type. Its great intention was fulfilled at the crucifixion of our Lord, when it was rent in twain. The holy of holies being laid open, the Gentiles, from that time, as well as the Jews, were to be received into covenant with God.

How

How ſtrongly alſo did the ſheaf of the firſt-fruits conſecrated, and lifted up to God, repreſent Chriſt the firſt-fruits, raiſed from the dead?

The high-prieſt alſo entering into the Holy of holies, and making interceſſion for the ſins of the people, was an emblem of that great high-prieſt, who was to make interceſſion for the ſins of mankind.

To theſe rites and ceremonies we might add the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, which ſtill more expreſſively pointed out the life and character of the Meſſiah.—But to theſe, at preſent, I only allude, as I ſhall ſoon have another opportunity of ſpeaking of them more at large.

Thus, all theſe hiſtorical facts, ceremonies, and prophecies, prepared the Jewiſh nation to *expect a Redeemer*. Let us now ſee how the Jewiſh nation prepared the world *to receive him*—how *the law was* our *ſchoolmaſter alſo to bring us to Chriſt*.

As the Jewiſh nation was at once meant to be the guardian of God's law, and the means of communicating that law to other nations, it was conſtituted in a peculiar manner. In the ordering

of

of it divine Providence ſeems to have had two things in view—it was to be kept ſeparate from other nations to preſerve the *purity* of religion—and to convey the *knowledge* of it, it was to have the means of intercourſe. For both theſe purpoſes it ſeems to have been admirably contrived.

In the firſt place, as the Jews were bred up with a notion of their being the peculiar people of God; though, in fact, they were acting a part ſubſervient to the reſt of the world, their pride kept them ſeparate from other nations. "*Ye know*," ſays St. Peter to Cornelius, "*that it is an unlawful thing for a Jew to keep company with, or come unto one of another nation.*"

Other nations were as little inclined, in general, to mix with them. Their law had formed a hedge around them, and their many peculiar rites and ceremonies, ſo oppoſite to the cuſtoms of other people, made it almoſt impoſſible for any nation to unite with them. By their law indeed, they could unite with none, who did not enter into their covenant by circumciſion.

The neceſſity alſo the Jews were under of worſhipping at the temple of Jeruſalem, and performing their ſacrifices there, kept them much together,

gether, and greatly tended to enforce the national idea.

But though theſe cauſes of ſeparation acted ſo ſtrongly on the Jews, that they continue even at this very day a ſeparate people; yet the neceſſity of their affairs, or rather the providence of God, engaged them in a more intimate connection with other nations, than almoſt any people ever had; and this was the great mean of ſpreading their religious knowledge.

In early times their opportunities began of communicating with other nations. The patriarchs were in a conſtant ſtate of travel: and though the earth, it is true, was at that time thinly inhabited; yet it is plain, theſe holy wanderers had intercourſe with various tribes of people in their ſeveral journies; and no doubt depoſited among them, in ſome degree, a knowledge of the great truths of their religion.

The long captivity of the Iſraelites in Egypt was their next great mean of intercourſe. It is plain, the miracles of Moſes had not merely a view to the Jewiſh nation, but to the world at large. That great prophet tells Pharoah, that God did all theſe mighty works, that *his name might be declared through all the earth.*

After

After the Iſraelites left Egypt, and were ſettled in Judæa, they had great traffic with other nations, particularly with Tyre and Sidon, as we frequently read in ſcripture; and the Tyrians being at that time the moſt trading people in the world, carried with them, no doubt, into all parts, more or leſs, of the Jewiſh hopes of a Redeemer.

The Jewiſh wars alſo tended to ſpread theſe notices among thoſe nations with whom they were at variance.

The reſort of foreigners alſo among them, contributed to the ſame end. The glory of their temple, the ſplendid mode of their worſhip, and the renown of their lawgiver's wiſdom, attracted the notice of other nations. We often read in the New Teſtament of ſtrangers reſorting to Jeruſalem; among whom were ſometimes very illuſtrious perſons: and many of theſe ſtrangers, we may well ſuppoſe, would take notice of the remarkable rites and cuſtoms among the Jews; and would be inclined to enquire into the hidden meaning of them.

But above all other things, the captivity of the Jews in foreign lands, contributed to ſpread theſe intimations. And we may the rather believe it, becauſe

becauſe they continued ſo long under the power of their conquerors, that when their law was, in a manner, loſt at home; it was afterwards recovered from Babylon.

After their return from Babylon, they were conquered by the Romans; and this conqueſt opened a great communication between Rome and Jeruſalem. How much the cuſtoms of the two nations were known to each other, is evident both from ſeveral parts of the New Teſtament, and likewiſe from many paſſages in the Roman writers.—So that as the Babyloniſh captivity tended to diſperſe the knowledge of the Jewiſh law in the eaſt; the Romiſh conqueſt tended equally to diſperſe it in the weſt.

Thus intimations of the Jewiſh hopes of a Meſſiah, were ſcattered over many parts of the earth; and this remarkable people became the means, as Providence deſigned, of preparing the world for the great truths of the goſpel. They became that leaven, which, according to one of our Saviour's parables, was afterwards to ferment through the whole maſs of mankind.

I ſhall only detain you with a ſingle remark on what hath been ſaid.

We

We are under the greateſt obligations, you ſee, to reſpect the Old Teſtament as well as the New. Many ſerious people pay too little regard to the Old Teſtament, as if they ſuppoſed it had now done its duty.—But certainly they lie under a great miſtake. Some of the books of the Old Teſtament, no doubt, claim our attention more than others, on account of their intrinſic worth; and there are many difficulties in various parts of theſe ancient writings, which we are not able to ſolve ſo well as we could wiſh; yet ſtill they are greatly entitled to our regard, on their own account—as they have been the means of preparing the world for the reception of the Chriſtian religion; and as they are ſtill one of the ſtanding evidences of the truth of it.

SERMON XV.

2 TIM. iii. 16.

III. ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD.

IN my laſt diſcourſe I explained to you the preparation made by the providence of God for the reception of the goſpel. In conſequence of it, many nations, as well as the Jews, expected ſome divine inſtructor to appear about the time when Chriſt actually did appear.

As the great event approached, it pleaſed God to employ one other mode of preparation.—This was the preaching of John the Baptiſt. The particular end of John's preaching, as it appears, was to unite, and point to their proper object, the various prophetic notices, which had gone before. All was now fulfilled: and the world was ſpeedily

ſpeedily to ſee that great perſonage, who had been, more or leſs, expected through every age ſince the fall of man.

What were the expectations of mankind when this wonderful event was to take place? All that is grand, all that is ſplendid in human affairs, was expected here to be diſplayed. The Jews had no idea but of a conqueror, riding in a triumphal chariot, deſtroying his enemies on every ſide, and eſtabliſhing his faithful followers in all the fulneſs of empire.

But God's ways are not like man's ways. The Saviour of the world, appeared with very different notions of dignity. His dignity was holineſs; his worldly ornament, a meek and gentle ſpirit. Though deſcended from David, his birth was obſcure; and his life, till the 30th year of his age, when he entered on his public miniſtry, was ſpent in the cloſeſt retirement.

On his appearing openly in the world, he appealed for the truth of his divine commiſſion to the prophecies, which he fulfilled; and the miracles which he wrought.

Theſe two kinds of proofs we ſhall conſider; but as they both depend on the truth of ſcripture, it is neceſſary, before we proceed, to ſhew on what

grounds we believe in ſcripture—that is, that the book, which we call the Bible, (the Old Teſtament and the New,) was, as the text aſſures us, *given by inſpiration of God*, or written by the holy perſons, under whoſe names we receive them.—This ſhall be the ſubject of the following diſcourſe.

The Old Teſtament begins with the five books of Moſes. Let us ſee how incredible it is, that theſe books could have been forged.

When the Iſraelites left Egypt, they amounted to many thouſands of people. All the miracles which were wrought, both in Egypt and in the wilderneſs, are affirmed in theſe books to have been wrought before this multitude; and, it is evident, they were miracles, of which the ſenſes of men could eaſily judge. The plagues inflicted on the hardened Egyptians—the miracle of paſſing the red ſea—the manna, and quails—the water from the rock—the brazen ſerpent, were plain to all men's ſenſes. Impoſtors always perform their works in ſecret.

Now all theſe miracles were immediately recorded in the books of Moſes, when thouſands of courſe were alive who muſt have ſeen them; and

we

we cannot conceive, that Moſes would have publiſhed an account of thoſe miracles, which ſuch numbers could have contradicted, if they had not really been performed. Moſes, therefore, could not have forged them. And we cannot conceive, that an account of them could have been forged afterwards, as theſe records were handed down from father to ſon from the time of Moſes.—Thus the Pſalmiſt, in the 78th Pſalm, which is a noble memorial of all theſe wonderful works, begins it by tracing the remembrance of them through ſucceſſive generations: He mentions them as things, *which they had heard and known, and ſuch as their fathers had told them—he enjoins them not to hide them from the children of the generations to come—that their poſterity might know them, and the children, which were yet unborn—to the intent, that when they came up, they might ſhew their children the ſame.* Wonderful works thus *publicly performed*, and thus *nationally recorded*, we conclude could never have been forged.

Now on the credit of theſe miracles the Jewiſh law was founded. The ſame books which record the one, record the other. This law was originally received by the Jews with the utmoſt reverence. It was conſtantly read in their places

of worſhip. A body of men had ever been ſet apart to explain it. Nay, it was in ſuch eſteem, that the Jewiſh learning of thoſe times was entirely confined to the knowledge of it.—Nor was the record of theſe laws leſs an object of attention to private people, than to the public in general; for it regiſtered all their tribes, and the origin of all their families; ſo that every ſingle Jew was intereſted in preſerving the purity of it.—It is remarkable alſo, that every king was obliged, once in his life, to tranſcribe it.

Now this being the caſe, how was it poſſible for a forgery to be introduced in a book, which was from the beginning in the hands of ſo many people, continually the object both of public and private concern—and at this very day preſerved both by Jews and Chriſtians with the moſt ſacred attention.

At what period of the Jewiſh hiſtory could ſuch a forgery have happened? Could it have happened in the wilderneſs?

That ſeems impoſſible, becauſe numbers of people were ſtill alive, who were appealed to, as having ſeen the miracles, and the law given with ſo much awful pomp from Mount Sinai.

Was

Was it afterwards, when the Jewiſh nation had taken a legal eſtabliſhment?

That ſeems equally impoſſible; for when laws are once eſtabliſhed, it is abſurd to ſuppoſe they can be altered without the knowledge of the people who have long obeyed them; or that fictitious laws can be ſubſtituted in their room, without giving a general alarm.

We conclude therefore, that the books of Moſes, which are the regiſter of his miracles and laws, are at this day what he left them, and are that word which was given him, as the text ſays, *by inſpiration of God.*

The prophets, the pſalms, the moral writings and hiſtory of the Jews, make up the remaining part of the Bible; and taken altogether, are ſometimes called in the New Teſtament by the general name of *the Prophets.* Thus, when our Saviour mentions the law and the prophets, he means the five books of Moſes, and the other parts of ſcripture. For the hiſtorical parts of the Bible, the books of Samuel particularly, and Kings, may very properly be called the books of the prophets, becauſe they were all written by the prophets, who were thus inſtructed to leave behind them an hiſtorical account of God's dealings with the Jews,

to be a ſtanding record to poſterity, that nations have in the end been deſtroyed when they forſook the law of God.

Now all theſe books, as well as the law, were in the higheſt eſteem among the Jews, who laid them up in the Tabernacle among their moſt ſacred treaſures. They were in eſteem alſo with the Samaritans, (the books of Moſes at leaſt,) who hated the Jews with the moſt national rancour, and would not certainly have received their ſcriptures, if they had not been fully convinced of their antiquity and truth.—Beſides this, the Jewiſh ſcriptures were in high eſteem among other nations, who valued them for their wiſdom, as well as their antiquity. They were tranſlated by the heathen into the Greek language, (the language then moſt in uſe,) and were conſidered as a great ornament to the politeſt libraries of thoſe times. And this tranſlation is ſtill held in great eſteem. So that, on laying all theſe conſiderations together, there hardly appears to be even the poſſibility of a forgery. We have every reaſon therefore to conclude, that the whole of the Old Teſtament was written by the perſons to whom the ſeveral parts of it are aſcribed; and that it really is that word of God which it pretends to be.

Let

Let us now therefore conſider the New Teſtament in the ſame light, and ſee what grounds we have for believing it alſo to come directly from the perſons whoſe names it bears.

In the firſt place, we have books yet extant, written in the very earlieſt ages of Chriſtianity, which *quote* various paſſages from it, exactly as we read them. We have it alſo from the beſt authority, that the books of the New Teſtament were *read*, in the manner in which we now have them, in all Chriſtian churches, about the middle of the ſecond century—that is, about 150 years after the birth of Chriſt.

The account we have of the manner of collecting theſe ſacred books, and putting them into the order, in which we now have them, is another very ſtrong argument in favour of their truth. It was found, that many goſpels and epiſtles had been written after the death of Jeſus, all of which pretended to the ſame divine origin. It became neceſſary, therefore, to make a ſeparation among them: and ſome writers of good credit affirm, that this ſeparation was made by St. John himſelf, who lived to a very advanced age. Whether this be true, it is certain, a ſeparation was made nearly about

about his time, and with great diſcretion. For though many of thoſe ancient writings were very excellent in themſelves; yet none of them were admitted, which could not bring proof of their having been written by apoſtolical perſons: and this proof might eaſily have been obtained, as ſo ſhort a time had intervened, ſince they were written.

This may be called *poſitive* proof. We may add alſo what may be called *negative* proof; that is, we think the matter well proved, becauſe nobody ever denyed it. Chriſtianity had always, even in its earlieſt ſtate, many enemies, who would gladly have taken every method to diſparage it. But none of them ever pretended to ſay, the ſeveral books of ſcripture were written by any perſons, except thoſe whoſe names they bear. As they lived near the times when the ſcriptures were publiſhed, they ſaw how impracticable it was to object on that head.

At what time indeed could a forgery have taken place? A forgery here appears as impoſſible, as in the caſe of the Old Teſtament.—Let us ſuppoſe the ſcriptures were not written at the time we affirm, but were introduced by deſigning men in ſome later age. Can we imagine, that it could have

have been done without the knowledge of the Chriſtians of that age; or if it had been attempted, can we imagine they would have received it? They would ſurely have ſeen at once, that ſuch a book was not what it pretended to be; and that inſtead of being handed down from apoſtolic times, it was produced only yeſterday.—It is plain therefore, that either no forgery of this kind had ever been attempted, or if it had been attempted, that it miſcarried.

Even in books of leſs value, it is difficult to contrive a fraud. When a book is owned by its author, and acknowledged by the world, it is almoſt impoſſible for any objector to give the credit of it to another. Even after the author's death, the credit of the book will deſcend through time with the book itſelf. Whoever ſhould doubt it, would be well anſwered by an appeal to the general opinion of antiquity. Since the book was publiſhed no ſuſpicion againſt it hath ariſen.

But the evidence in favour of the ſcripture is ſtill ſtronger than that of any other ancient book, inaſmuch as it is more celebrated, and hath been, of courſe, more enquired into than any other. Its friends enquired into its authority, becauſe it contained the title of all their hopes; and its enemies, becauſe

becauſe it held out the object of all their fears. The former were not more ſolicitous to find it true, than the latter were to find it falſe; and both equally contributed to confirm its credit.

But though the ſcriptures could not, in the whole, be forged, yet it may be aſked, might they not in many parts have been corrupted?

In any material degree they certainly could not. Chriſtianity, from the beginning, was divided into a variety of different ſects, as it is now. All theſe ſects owned the ſcriptures, and conſidered them as the foundation of their ſeveral religious opinions. They would, of courſe, therefore have a ſtrict eye upon each other, and would not have ſuffered any corruption in a matter which equally concerned them all. The papiſts have, at this day, the ſame ſcripture which we have, and endeavour to prove from it all the tenets of their church. But if, in defence of any of their tenets, they ſhould corrupt the text of ſcripture, and put in new paſſages to ſupport them, we ſhould ſoon take the alarm, and ſhew the world theſe new paſſages reſted on no authority, but were the mere invention of the papiſts.—As it would be impoſſible therefore, for any ſet of men, at this time, to corrupt the ſcriptures, ſo would it have been equally impoſſible

impoſſible for any ſet of men to have corrupted them at any other time.

Nor are the few variations, which we find in ſcripture, any argument againſt its truth.—As far as the truth of religion is concerned, no doubt, the ſcriptures are under the immediate inſpiration of God. Farther than this, there is no neceſſity to ſuppoſe it. Theſe little variations, therefore, are ſo far from being an argument againſt the truth of ſcripture, that they tend greatly to confirm it. From the *general agreement* of the whole, it appears plain, that the ſame ſpirit over-ruled it; and from the *little variations*, it appears as plain, that the writers were not in league together. If all the books of ſcripture had agreed in every tittle, the enemies of religion might have called them a contrivance.

It may be added, that in proof of the authenticity of both Teſtaments, they are ſo cloſely connected, that if you prove either to be true, you prove the truth alſo of the other.

To conclude then from the whole: when we are convinced of the truth of ſcripture, every thing in ſcripture becomes, of courſe, an object of be-

lief. We muſt not, after ſuch conviction, pretend to ſay, this or that doctrine is not *reaſonable*, and therefore we cannot believe it. God hath given us evidence ſufficient to convince us, that the ſcriptures are true; and in examining this evidence, we muſt uſe our reaſon. After that, we muſt contemplate ſuch doctrines as are above our reaſon, with the eye of faith.

After all, the beſt proof of the truth of ſcripture, and the beſt anſwer to all the objections that can be made to it, is to ſhew its effects on our lives. This is an appeal to our own feelings. Let us read it—let us meditate upon it—apply it to ourſelves—and transfuſe the ſpirit of it into our hearts, and we ſhall find this to be the beſt evidence of its coming from God.

SERMON XVI.

JOHN, v. 26.

IV. THE WORKS THAT I DO, THEY BEAR WITNESS OF ME, THAT THE FATHER HATH SENT ME.

ACTS, iii. 24.

YEA, AND ALL THE PROPHETS, FROM SAMUEL, AND THOSE THAT FOLLOW AFTER, AS MANY AS HAVE SPOKEN, HAVE LIKEWISE FORETOLD OF THESE DAYS.

HAVING proved the holy ſcriptures to be written by the perſons whoſe names they bear; and that of courſe they are thoſe divine books, which they pretend to be; let us now examine the evidence contained in them, ariſing from *miracles* and *prophecies*, on which our bleſſed Saviour reſted his authority.

Let

Let us firſt enquire into the nature of a miracle.

Every thing we ſee is, in one ſenſe, a miracle; it is beyond our comprehenſion. We put a twig into the ground; and find, in a few years it becomes a tree: but how it draws its nouriſhment from the earth, and how it increaſes, we know not.

We look around us, and ſee the foreſt ſometimes ſhaken by ſtorms; at other times juſt yielding to the breeze; in one part of the year, in full leaf, in another, naked and deſolate. We all know the ſeaſons have an effect on theſe things; and philoſophers will conjecture at a few immediate cauſes; but in what manner theſe cauſes act, and how they put nature in motion, the wiſeſt of them know not. When the ſtorm is up, why does it not continue to rage? When the air is calm, what rouſes the ſtorm?—We know not—but muſt, after our deepeſt reſearches into firſt cauſes, reſt ſatisfied with reſolving all into the power of God.

Yet, notwithſtanding we cannot comprehend the moſt common of theſe appearances, they make no

no impreſſion on us, becauſe they *are* common—becauſe they happen according to a ſtated courſe, and are ſeen every day. If they were out of the common courſe of nature, though in themſelves not more difficult to comprehend, they would ſtill appear more wonderful to us—and more immediately the work of God. Thus, when we ſee a child grow into a man, and when the breath has left the body, turn to corruption—we are not in the leaſt ſurprized, becauſe we ſee it every day. But were we to ſee a man reſtored from ſickneſs to health by a word—or raiſed to life from the dead, by a mere command—though theſe things are not really more unaccountable, yet we call the uncommon event a miracle, merely becauſe it *is* uncommon. We acknowledge, however, that both are produced by God, becauſe it is evident, that no other power can produce them.

This is then, in few words, the nature of that evidence which ariſes from miracles. The ordinary courſe of nature proves the being and providence of God: theſe extraordinary acts of power prove the divine commiſſion of that perſon who performs them. And thus Elijah, in his controverſy with the prieſts of Baal, reſts the matter on a fair iſſue; *The God that anſwereth by fire, let*

him be God:—of courſe, you muſt conſider me as acting under his authority.

Now it was to theſe uncommon events, or what we uſually call *miracles*, to which Chriſt appealed. *The works, ſays he, which I do, bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me.* As if he had ſaid, theſe works you ſee, are not according to the order of nature, and are ſuch as could only be performed by that power, which can command nature. As you ſee me therefore perform them, it is plain, I act under that power. And thus Nicodemus, in his conference with Jeſus, properly ſtates the caſe. *Rabbi, we know, that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do theſe miracles that thou doeſt, except God be with him.*—And ſo the Jews univerſally allowed, that if *this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*

Now that Jeſus did perform theſe works, which are recorded in the New Teſtament, depends on what we have already proved—the truth of the New Teſtament. The only remaining difficulty is, that ſome deceit might have impoſed on the ſenſes of ſpectators.—With regard to the miracles of Moſes, it appeared, this could not poſſibly have been the caſe. And it was juſt as impoſſible with regard to the miracles of Chriſt. All people who wiſh

wiſh to impoſe on others, act as privately as they can. But the miracles of our Saviour ſeem to have been performed with a ſtudied view to lay them open to inquiry.—And indeed every inquiry was made, which always ended in the conviction of the inquirers.

Only conſider how you yourſelf would have acted, if you had lived at that time.—Suppoſe, for inſtance, you had heard of the miracle of giving ſight to the man who had been born blind *—you would not have given credit to ſo ſurprizing a relation, till you had enquired who the man was on whom this miracle was ſaid to have been wrought? Whether, in fact, he had been born blind? Whether he actually was blind at the time when our Saviour met him? and, whether it afterwards appeared, that he was really cured?—All theſe inquiries you would certainly have made yourſelf, or have been well informed they had been made by credible people, before you would have believed the miracle.—And if *you* would have made theſe inquiries, can you reaſonably ſuppoſe, they were not made by thoſe who lived at that time? or that they would have admitted that won-

* See John, ix.

derful fact on eaſier evidence, than you ſhould have done?

By the Scribes and Phariſees indeed we know theſe inquiries were made, and ended in a full proof. But the Scribes and Phariſees were not to be convinced by a full proof. *Facts*, which they could not deny; through hardened malice they aſcribed to the devil.

With regard to the greateſt of all miracles, our Saviour's reſurrection from the dead, you would certainly have acted in the ſame way, and never have been ſatisfied, till you had gotten ſufficient evidence of the truth. The apoſtles did act in this cautious manner. At firſt we know they paid no credit to what they had heard. But their making it the continued ſubject of their preaching afterwards, was in itſelf *a ſufficient evidence* of its truth. They would certainly have been ſilent on the ſubject, if they had not been aſſured the fact was well known in the country.

In fine, if a man be *determined*, like the Scribes and Pharſees, not to believe in miracles, we preſs him no farther. It would be folly. But if he have a mind candid and open, one ſhould think he might, on this point, find evidence enough to convince him.

Having

Having taken this ſhort view of the evidence ariſing from *miracles*, let us examine the other evidence of our Saviour's authority, drawn from *prophecy*. The purport of prophecy, as our Saviour himſelf informs us, is *to tell before it comes to paſs, that when it is come to paſs we may believe.*

When we look into the Old Teſtament, we cannot but obſerve, that in many paſſages, ſome extraordinary perſon is deſcribed, who was, in proceſs of time, to make his appearance in the world. A prophetic promiſe was given very early, that *the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head.* This was obſcure, no doubt; but ſtill it was ſufficient to mark the intention of ſome ſpiritual good for the conſolation of fallen man. Afterwards this prophecy was ſtill made plainer, by a promiſe made, in ſucceſſion to the patriarchs, that *in their ſeed all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed.*

As the time of this great event approached, the prophetic language became plainer and more circumſtantial. The character, the actions, the office; in ſhort, the life and death of the Meſſiah, are all diſtinctly marked.—He was to be born of a virgin—of the houſe of David—at the town of Bethlehem—the early part of his life was to be

ſpent in Egypt—he was to become a preacher of righteouſneſs—to turn the hearts of the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt—he was to be the prince of his people; and yet to appear in the loweſt condition, he was to be a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief.—He is deſcribed to be without ſin; yet he was to be numbered with tranſgreſſors, and treated like a common malefactor.—The very manner of his death is pointed out—his hands and his feet were to be pierced.—Notwithſtanding theſe indignities, he was to make his grave with the rich, and was never to ſee corruption.

Now the lateſt of theſe prophecies had been publiſhed between three and four hundred years before Chriſt—many of them much earlier, and had been in the hands, not only of the Jews, but of many other nations with whom they had commerce.

When we open the New Teſtament, we ſee how exactly all theſe notices were fulfilled. No two things can be more alike than the prophecies of Chriſt in one Teſtament are to the hiſtory of him in the other. Here we ſee him born of a virgin—of the houſe of David—at the town of Bethlehem. To avoid the perſecution of Herod, he

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was ſent, in his childhood, into Egypt.—Afterwards he became a preacher of righteouſneſs, and turned the hearts of the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt. So far was he from aſſuming any worldly pomp, that he appeared in the loweſt character. The joys of this world had no charms for him; he was literally, as the prophet deſcribed him, *a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief.* Though his whole life was ſpent without ſin, and in a uniform courſe of kindneſs to others; yet he was numbered with tranſgreſſors, and crucified like a common malefactor. His hands and his feet were pierced with nails, and his ſide with a ſpear.—But notwithſtanding theſe indignities, which attended his death, we are told, he was to make his grave with the rich, and was never to ſee corruption. Accordingly we read, that his body was taken from the croſs, and given to Joſeph of Arimathea, who is expreſsly called a *rich man*; and by him it was depoſited in his own tomb. On the third day, Chriſt roſe from the dead, without receiving the leaſt taint from corruption.—Thus we ſee exactly fulfilled all theſe prophecies of the Old Teſtament. With the hiſtory of Chriſt they perfectly correſpond, and have no ſimilitude to the hiſtory of any other perſon.—To a candid mind,

perhaps, no proof can be ſtronger than theſe wonderful coincidences, which we call *prophecies*.

The argument ſtill runs on. Beſides theſe prophecies to which our Saviour directly appealed, as relating immediately to himſelf, and deſcribing his character and office; there were others in the Old Teſtament, which related to him, as he was connected with the Jews. To theſe indeed he could not directly appeal in his own life-time, but he referred his followers to the completion of them.

Among theſe, the two great leading prophecies were thoſe which foretold the calling of the Gentiles, and the diſperſion of the Jews.

The calling of the Gentiles—that is, the reception of the Gentiles into the Chriſtian church, was one of the moſt early prophecies of the Old Teſtament. The Jews were ſingled out, in appearance, as the favourite people of God. But if they had attended cloſely to their prophets, they might have diſcovered (as the wiſeſt of them did diſcover), that they were only intended to introduce the Chriſtian religion into the world. Thoſe early promiſes, which were repeated to the patriarchs, were plainly not confined to their poſterity. It was not ſaid, the Jewiſh poſterity alone ſhould be bleſſed, but *all the nations of the earth*. And when

when the later prophets, as the great event approached, ſpoke a plainer language, the whole Jewiſh nation might have underſtood, as Simeon did, *that a light was now ſprung up to lighten the Gentiles.*

The great prophecy of the diſperſion of the Jewiſh nation was equally remarkable. It makes a very early appearance in the Old Teſtament, being attributed by Moſes to the patriarch Jacob. *The ſceptre ſhall not depart from Iſrael, nor a lawgiver from between his knees, until Shiloh come.* Shiloh is univerſally underſtood to mean the Meſſiah. The prophecy therefore plainly implies, that the Jewiſh government ſhould continue till the time of Chriſt, and no longer. This prophecy, and others pointing to the ſame event, were exactly fulfilled. Soon after the death of Chriſt, the city of Jeruſalem was deſtroyed by the Romans; and the Jews being no longer wanted as an introduction to the Chriſtian religion, are now by their diſperſion, converted into a ſtanding proof of its truth. The Gentiles are called in, and the *nations of the earth are bleſſed.* What ſtill remains to complete theſe prophecies among thoſe nations, which have never had the Chriſtian faith among them, we hope, and doubt not, will in due time be fulfilled. We have

have ſeen large advances made in our times, towards the introduction of Chriſtianity, both in the eaſt, and in the weſt; and doubt not, but all thoſe vaſt continents of Aſia, Africa, and America, will, in a courſe of ages, be civilized*, and planted with the goſpel. The ſincerity and piety of men, it is true, will never be anſwerable to the means, which God hath graciouſly vouchſafed; and it will always be a real grief to good men, that among many, there exiſts little more than the name of Chriſtian.—But God Almighty does not work miracles to make men religious. He only means to ſet the truth before them. In all places men may embrace it if they pleaſe—or if they pleaſe, they may reject it. God does his part by placing it before them.

Having thus taken a view of the two grand evidences from *miracles* and *prophecies*, by which

* Since miracles have ceaſed, civilization ſeems to be the only human means, through which the goſpel can make its way among ſavage nations. Miſſionaries, I fear, have been of no great ſervice. They have coſt the charitable ſocieties large ſums of money, but we hear of little effect. Indeed, what can an ambaſſador do without credentials?

Chriſt

Chriſt proved himſelf to be the Meſſiah, and the Chriſtian religion, of courſe, to be true; we cannot but obſerve, with what wonderful equality God, in his infinite goodneſs, hath divided the force of theſe two kinds of evidence between us and the Chriſtians of early ages. They were eye-witneſſes of the *miracles* of Chriſt, and his apoſtles—or, at leaſt, living nearer apoſtolic times, they lived nearer the ſource of evidence.—But with regard to *prophecies*, we have a ſtronger force of evidence than they had, becauſe in our time more of theſe wonderful predictions are fulfilled. Thus, for inſtance, with regard to the diſperſion of the Jews, though the early Chriſtians ſaw the Jewiſh government deſtroyed; yet for any thing that appeared, it might again recover new ſtrength. It had done ſo before on ſimilar occaſions. But *we* have ſeen that great prophecy completely fulfilled. Seventeen hundred years have elapſed ſince the deſtruction of Jeruſalem; and though attempts have been made to reſtore it, they have all miſcarried; and the Jews remain, at this day, an unſettled wandering people, ſcattered over the face of the earth, and carrying with them every where, a wonderful monument of the truth of the Chriſtian religion. Thus again, the falling away of many,

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the deſertion of the goſpel, and the corruption of principle and practice among Chriſtians—are prophecies which, both among individuals, and in the vaſt regions of modern infidelity, we have unhappily ſeen more completely fulfilled, than the ancient Chriſtians ever ſaw.

May God grant, that from theſe great evidences of our religion, we may be fully convinced of its truth, and ſhew our conviction by leading ſuch pious lives, as may be an honour to it, and a comfort and happineſs to ourſelves!

SERMON XVII.

ROMANS, X. 3.

V. CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS TO THEM THAT BELIEVE.

HAVING thus proved the truth of the Chriſtian religion, I ſhall now endeavour to ſhew you its peculiar excellence, by pointing out the great difference between it and every other religion that hath appeared in the world.

The words of the text, *Chriſt is the end of the law for righteouſneſs to them that believe*, naturally point it out. They imply theſe things—that there had always been a law given to man—that this law was inſufficient to ſave him—but that Chriſt came into the world as the *end of the law*; that is, to do what the law could not do, namely, to ſave mankind.—This ſeems to be the doctrine of the text; and

and this doctrine I propoſe to explain in the following diſcourſe, by inquiring, *firſt*, into the *nature of that law which was given to mankind before Chriſtianity*—and, *ſecondly*, *in what eſſential point Chriſtianity differs from it.*

I am firſt to inquire into the nature of that law, which was given to mankind before Chriſtianity.

The *law of nature*, as it is called, and the *law of Moſes*, are the only ſpecies of law we are acquainted with before that period: and if we inquire into what *promiſes* they make, or what *hopes* they furniſh, we ſhall find very little on either of theſe heads. *Promiſes of future happineſs* even the law of Moſes made none. Mankind, in all ages, might have had *hopes*, that God would reward virtue with future happineſs. But they had no certain knowledge of it, and no ground even to *hope*, unleſs they ſhould conform to the exact tenor of the law, which was *perfect obedience*. Pardon they had no ground to expect. Every ſin was a debt againſt them, of which they had no means of payment. Repentance might make them more cautious; but they had no room to ſuppoſe it could wipe off a ſcore already contracted. Sacrifice

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was the only idea of atonement they had, and to it they had recourſe. And this, by the way, ſhews they had full apprehenſions of their own inſufficiency, and wiſhed to reſt on ſomething better than their *own moral attainments*, for their acceptance with God.

In ſhort, man had the bare letter of the law before him. If he could live up to the tenor of that law, it was well; he might hope: if not, he had not the leaſt ground to aſſure himſelf of the divine acceptance.

Thus then, the moſt comfortable language, which the beſt religion before Chriſtianity, even the Jewiſh, could ſpeak, was barely this. Here is a rule of life given you. If you can live up to it in all particulars, you may reaſonably claim ſalvation as your reward. *Moſes*, ſaith St. Paul, *deſcribeth the righteouſneſs which is of the law, ſaying, the man who doth theſe things ſhall live by them.* And again, *to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned as grace, but of debt:* that is, he who can fulfil the whole law—he who can perform his whole duty, the apoſtle ſuppoſes has a *right to claim everlaſting happineſs* for his reward.

But the melancholy queſtion is, who could do this? Who could look into himſelf, and ſay, I have kept the whole law—I have governed my appetites and paſſions by the ſtricteſt rules of reaſon —my thoughts have been pure—my words and actions inoffenſive and innocent. *All ſin*, the apoſtle tells us, *is the tranſgreſſion of the law;* and what man is there who hath not committed ſin?—who hath not of courſe tranſgreſſed ſome part of the law, and loſt that title to everlaſting life, which he had not the leaſt reaſon to expect, but from the obſervance of the whole?

Thus then, as we ſee the impoſſibility of keeping the whole law, we ſee the impoſſibility likewiſe of obtaining ſalvation by the law. *For*, as the apoſtle again ſpeaks, *by the deeds of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified, for by the law is the knowledge of ſin.*

The law then—obſerve—that is, the Jewiſh, and every other religion before Chriſt, give us no hope of ſalvation but through our own merits; and this hope muſt be founded on *perfect obedience*. *This do, and live*, is the tenor of the law. There was no proviſion made for deficiencies. The *whole law* was to be kept. Men were to be perfect.

fect. The law could not pardon. Every tranſgreſſion ſubjected men to puniſhment.

Let us now, *ſecondly*, conſider, in oppoſition to this, what comforts Chriſtianity holds out; or *in what eſſential points it differs from the moral law.*

This matter is well opened in the text: *Chriſt is the end of the law for righteouſneſs to them that believe*:—that is, Chriſt came to make up the deficiences of the law, and to ſave mankind through *his merits*, as they could not be ſaved through their own.

Chriſt gave us indeed a more perfect law to direct our lives: but this was not the great purpoſe of his coming. His great end was to make an atonement by his death for the ſins of mankind—for the ſins of *all* mankind; not of thoſe only, who lived ſince his time, but of thoſe of all nations, and all times, even from the beginning of the world to this hour. He was *the lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world*—a remedy provided by the merciful goodneſs of a gracious God, immediately to take place as ſoon as the tranſgreſſion was committed. Every one, it is true, ſhall be ac-

countable for the advantages he hath had, and ſhall be judged accordingly: let thoſe advantages however be as little as they may, if he hath lived up to them, be he Jew, Turk, or Heathen, it matters not, we have every reaſon to believe, that *Chriſt was the lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world*, for *him*, as well as for *us*. Chriſt was the promiſed Meſſiah, in whom, as was anciently propheſied, *all the nations of the earth were bleſſed*—not this, or that nation, which hath enjoyed the Moſaic law, or the light of Chriſtianity; but, we are told, *all the nations of the earth*. And thus St. John expreſſes it: *Chriſt is the propitiation for our ſins—and not for ours only, but for the ſins of the whole world*. And St. Peter, to the ſame purpoſe, aſſures us, that *God is no reſpecter of perſons, but that in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with him*.

The text ſeems to reſtrict ſalvation to thoſe *who believe*: but it can only apply to ſuch as live *in a Chriſtian country*—not to thoſe who never heard of the goſpel.

Thus then, we ſee, the moral law ſpeaks to us as beings capable of preſerving ourſelves through its influence, in that ſtate of perfection in which we were created. But after the fall, the moral

law became no longer ſufficient. Sinful man wanted ſomething more. Let his rule be ever ſo perfect, if he could not comply with it, a deficiency ſtill remained.

The goſpel therefore kindly intervening, makes up that deficiency—ſpeaks to men not as they once *were*, perfect creatures, but as they now *are*, fallen, loſt, and miſerable ſinners—and in the room of that abſolute obedience, which the law exacts, accepts through the merits of Chriſt, our penitence and ſincere endeavours.

Here then we ſee the preciſe and eſſential difference between Chriſtianity and the moral law. Both acknowledged the exiſtence of a Deity, though Chriſtianity opened the divine attributes more clearly. Both give excellent rules for the direction of our lives, though the Chriſtian ſyſtem was greatly more perfect. Both had a ſenſe of God's ſpiritual aſſiſtance: one had conjecture at leaſt, if the other gave aſſurance. Both acknowledged the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate; though a clear revelation on theſe points was only made by the goſpel. This much at leaſt may be ſaid, that on all theſe grand articles of religion, mankind before the times of Chriſtianity, were not totally uninformed; ſome notices they certainly

had. But the atonement of Christ for the sins of the world was wholly new. Men had no idea of it, but through the rite of sacrifice, which did not so much tend to give them any rational idea of the sacrifice of Christ, as to prepare them more readily to acquiesce in it, after they should in fact become acquainted with it. That mankind, conscious of their frailties and sins, could be restored to God's favour, and have those sins forgiven, was a doctrine of which the world had not the least idea before the Christian religion.—This is, therefore, the great and distinguishing mark, which points the difference between it and every other religion that hath appeared in the world.

We enter not into the *manner* in which the death of Christ saves us from the effects of sin. This is a matter solely with God. Our reason cannot comprehend it, and it is presumptuous to examine it. If we are convinced that the Scripture is the word of God, we must take such of its doctrines as are above our capacity, on its credit.—And as the Scripture informs us as plainly as words can speak, that Christ came to *save us from our sins*; with this simple truth, which is all we can comprehend, we should rest satisfied.

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To conclude then from the whole, it behoves every one who believes in the immortality of his ſoul, to look well into this matter, and conſider whether the moral law—the law of nature—or the law of reaſon—let him call it what he will, gives him any hope of ſalvation—whether in the firſt place, he can obey it—or whether it gives him any hope of pardon, if he tranſgreſs it. If he find it is not in human nature to live without committing ſin; and that no religion but Chriſtianity, gives him any hope of pardon, if he do commit ſin, why then it is certainly ſafeſt for him to look round for ſome better ſource of comfort than the moral law can furniſh. Though we have every reaſon to believe, the uninlightened heathen will be the object of God's mercy through Chriſt, if he live up to the little knowledge he hath; yet we have no ground to conclude, that any man ſhall be accepted, who hath had opportunities of examining Chriſtianity, and yet ſtill rejects it.

SERMON XVIII.

GAL. vi. 15.

VI. IN CHRIST JESUS NEITHER CIRCUMCISION AVAILETH ANY THING, NOR UNCIRCUMCISION, BUT A NEW CREATURE.

IN my laſt diſcourſe I ſhewed you the grand diſtinction between the Chriſtian religion, and all other religions. It conſiſted in the atonement, which our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt made for the ſins of mankind.—This was an idea perfectly new to the world, except in the typical repreſentations of that atonement, which had, from the beginning, been held out in ſacrifice.

But now, though ſalvation be thus offered to mankind, by the free grace of God through Jeſus Chriſt; yet we muſt carefully remember, that it depends

depends on our performance of the conditions, on which it is offered.

What thoſe conditions are, I ſhall endeavour to explain, and ſhall open the ſubject, by ſhewing you *the general intention of the Chriſtian religion.*

As its *particular diſtinction* conſiſted in the atonement it offered for ſin, ſo its *great intention* was to reſtore man to a ſtate of happineſs, by purifying his affections, and drawing him, as much as poſſible, to that holy innocence of life, which he had loſt by the fall of his firſt parents.

The great atonement took place, we ſuppoſe, immediately on that event; from which time, we apprehend, God graciouſly accepted all mankind, who lived up to the light they enjoyed. The poor uninlightened heathen, if he governed himſelf by ſuch notions of right and wrong, as nature had impreſſed upon him, we doubt not would meet the mercy of God. The more civilized heathen, who had better notices of things, would be expected to follow better rules; while the Jew, who had the law of Moſes to guide him, was expected ſtill to lead a more holy life.

But with regard to God's mercy, and the manner in which he may think proper to treat the different ſituations of mankind, we have nothing to

do—except merely, as we humbly endeavour, to vindicate his juſtice.—What concerns *us* in this matter is, not to attend ſo much to the ſituation of other people, as to our own.

Now in whatever manner God pleaſes to treat the heathen world, this is an undeniable truth, that he will treat *us* by the rules of the goſpel. Whatever mercy he may grant to thoſe, who never heard of the goſpel, we, who are acquainted with it, have not the leaſt title to expect favour, but by conforming ourſelves to the rules it preſcribes. By the rules of the goſpel we are to live—under its promiſes or threatenings we are to die—and by its laws we are to be judged after death.

Whatever part of ſcripture we examine, we find the great ſtreſs is every where laid upon, what is called, a *new life*. In the text it is called a *new creature*. And in other paſſages, though the words may vary, the meaning is the ſame. Sometimes we are inſtructed *to crucify the old man*; ſometimes to be *buried with Chriſt*; and ſometimes *to put on Chriſt*. But all theſe, and other ſimilar expreſſions, unite in ſignifying that the goſpel is intended to make ſome great change in mankind.

Before

Before Chriſtianity, when man knew not, with certainty, that he had a connection with any future ſtate—when he conceived, that this world might be the only place of his abode—that here he was to live, and here he was to die; and there might then be an end of him for ever—it is no wonder if this world, in a great degree, ingroſſed his affections. Here lay his intereſt; and here, of courſe, would be his heart.

But now, ſince Chriſtianity hath aſſured us, theſe are miſtaken notions—that this world is *not* intended for our abode—that it is intended for a ſtate of preparation only for a future world—that although we periſh here, we ſhall live eternally hereafter—one ſhould think it required but little argument to convince us, that other rules, and a different manner of life ſhould appear neceſſary.

Now there is nothing more in the doctrines of Chriſtianity than this. It juſt inſtructs us, how to prepare ourſelves for another world. It reveals the immortality of our ſouls, and forbids us to pay our chief attention to our bodies. It diſplays the glories of heaven, and it inſtructs us not to give up ourſelves entirely to the world.—It denounces God's wrath againſt diſobedience, and preſſes

preſſes theſe inſtructions upon us on this intereſting conſideration, that this life, which is but for a moment, bears no compariſon with that, which is to laſt for ever.

Thus, you ſee, the certain knowledge of immortality changes the nature of every thing. It turns this world, and all its concerns, into things of trifling importance. What was before an habitation, becomes now a pilgrimage. Wealth and power, which before might have their charms, become now vanities and temptations. Pleaſure, which hath always led the world after it, becomes, in this view, one of the ſnares of the devil. While misfortunes, poverty, and ſickneſs, which were before conſidered as the worſt of evils, are repreſented in a Chriſtian light, as the happy means of drawing thoſe, who will make a right uſe of them, from the vanities of this world, to the glories of a better.

Thus, according to Chriſtianity, you ſee nothing is a good, but what purifies our nature; nothing an evil, but what injures our ſouls. So that, in ſhort, it knows nothing, that deſerves the name of good and evil, but what relates to another life. And thus our church, with great propriety, makes

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it abſolutely neceſſary, when we become Chriſtians, to renounce *the pomps and vanities of this wicked world*—as well as *all the ſinful luſts of the fleſh.*

Thus then, Chriſtianity is neither more nor leſs, than a rule of life fitted for the uſe of creatures, now in a ſtate of trial and ſuffering, but in hope of living hereafter in a ſtate of happineſs: it is a holy inſtitution, intended for the reſtoration of man, by perfecting his nature, ſo as to make him an object of God's favour.

In conformity therefore to this intention, the goſpel enjoins a devotion of ourſelves to God—a ſteady inclination to act agreeably to his will—and a gradual progreſs from one degree of perfection to another. *We are buried*, we are told, with *Chriſt by baptiſm into death*, ſo that *as Chriſt was raiſed from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life.* As if the apoſtle had ſaid, our *life*, in imitation of Chriſt's *death*, ſhould conſiſt in a deadneſs to the world. When we become Chriſtians, we are to bury our worldly inclinations: that as Chriſt was raiſed from the dead, ſo ſhould we be raiſed above the things of this world: or, as the apoſtle phraſes it, *we ſhould walk in newneſs of life.*—We enter upon new engagements. Our connections and relations

lations become new. We have new hopes, and new fears, and ought therefore to give a new direction to our lives, and conform ourſelves entirely to that new ſtate which Chriſtianity hath opened to us.

Now theſe, my brethren, are very ſerious truths; but, I think, I make them not more ſerious than the goſpel makes them. By living in the world, indeed, and having its concerns continually before our eyes, we become ſo prejudiced in its favour, and form ſuch cloſe connections with it, that, alas! to numbers of us, nothing ſeems really ſerious, in which the affairs of this world are not concerned. Numbers indeed think this life the grand point, and conſider religion only as ſomething to make the affairs of the world more regular.—I can only tell you, my brethren, that this is not Chriſtianity, nor in the leaſt conformable to the deſign and intention of it. Pray, liſten to the words of an apoſtle. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, and the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world; and the world paſſeth away, and the luſt thereof; but he that doeth the will of God, abideth*

for

for ever.—That is, we cannot ſet our affections equally on this world, and on the next, becauſe the nature of one is wholly different from that of the other; to which this ſtrong reflection is added, that they who conform themſelves to this world, muſt expect only the ſhort-lived portion it beſtows; but they who labour for the next, labour for eternity.

But this world, alas! is a buſy ſcene. I am ſo immerſed in its affairs, ſays the man of buſineſs, that I have not a moment to ſpare. If I had double the time, I could employ it. I have hardly leiſure either for amuſement or reſt. Whenever I remit, my affairs get wrong.

Then again the labourer cries out, I have my bread to get in this world—I have a family to maintain, and this cannot be done without employing all my time—I muſt either apply myſelf wholly to the things of this world, or I muſt ſtarve. Let our betters, who are well provided for, and have not their daily bread to get, employ themſelves about heavenly things.—We are ſtraitened.

It is very true, my brethren, you may be ſtraitened; and it is alſo very true, (with regard to your ſuperiors,) that from thoſe to whom much is given, will be expected the more. But however,

ever, be that matter as it may, their negligence is no excuſe for you: and that you may have no other excuſe, let me juſt remind you, that Chriſtianity was preached to the loweſt as well as to the higheſt. You muſt ſuppoſe it therefore to be ſuch a religion as is meant for the benefit of all mankind; ſuch as the poor, as well as the rich, may practiſe; and that your worldly concerns need be no hindrance to it. What were the apoſtles think you? Were they, do you ſuppoſe, men of large fortunes? They were tent-makers, carpenters, fiſhermen, and other low craftſmen and labourers, and had nothing more than barely the means, which you have, of getting their daily bread. Many of them, we know—probably all of them, worked at their buſineſs, even when they were apoſtles; and yet they could devote themſelves to God, and mix the world and religion together; and ſo may you.

Both the man of buſineſs therefore, and the man of leiſure, may be addreſſed in the ſame language. God never gave the goſpel, you may be ſure, without the means of uſing it. It is certain therefore, that you either have the means of attending to your religion, and your buſineſs at the ſame time; or the goſpel is a uſeleſs thing.

How,

How, pray, will it hinder buſineſs of any kind, to conſider, for inſtance, that you are always in the preſence of God Almighty—and that you ought always to act in your ſeveral ſtations uprightly and conſcientiouſly, as *unto the Lord, and not unto man?*

How will it hinder buſineſs to be reſigned to God in all your diſtreſſes, and to conſider them without repining, as ſent by his appointment? This will certainly tend to lighten your afflictions; but I ſee not how it need interfere with your buſineſs.

To have alſo a thankful and a grateful heart to God Almighty for his goodneſs to you in many inſtances, which all religious people experience, cannot certainly hinder any kind of buſineſs.

The buſieſt man alſo may have time frequently to conſider himſelf as a miſerable ſinner—to lament his own unworthineſs—to beg pardon for his ſins—and to truſt in the merits of Chriſt for his acceptance with God. Thoughts of this kind never prevent buſineſs. They are conſiſtent with any of your concerns.

None of your concerns need hinder your devout prayers to God, which may be offered up *occaſionally*, even in the midſt of your buſineſs—nor your

reſolutions

reſolutions and endeavours to correct anger, malice, hatred, envy, and every bad inclination which you feel within yourſelves—nor will any buſineſs be interrupted by your being kind to each other, as opportunities fall in your way.

Such of theſe duties as employ your *thoughts* only, may be performed, you ſee, in the midſt of buſineſs, without the leaſt loſs of time. But if a morning and evening prayer to God, call for ſome little portion of each day, you muſt be hard driven indeed, if you cannot for God's ſake, and your ſoul's ſake, afford that little.—Sunday, at leaſt, you may reckon on. Sunday, you know, is the Lord's day; and if you are ſo ſtrict in taking ſix days to yourſelf, one ſhould hope you would be as ſtrict in giving his own day to the Lord—in ſpending it in his ſervice—in going regularly to church, and reading the ſcriptures.

Now in all theſe duties which I have mentioned, conſiſts chiefly that devotion of yourſelves to God—that *newneſs of life*, of which the goſpel every where ſpeaks, and which is the great intention and end of its inſtructions.—You have no pretence then to ſay, that the buſineſs of life prevents the duties of religion. The moſt laborious man has time enough to be religious, if he have only an inclination

clination.—Speak honeſtly: if any of you heard of ſome diverſion going forward, which your mind was much ſet on, would your firſt thought be, that your buſineſs would prevent your pleaſure—or would you not rather caſt about, how you might contrive to make your buſineſs and your pleaſure agree?—If you were equally inclined, you might juſt as eaſily unite your buſineſs with your religion.

Let us then lay all excuſes aſide, and whether we are engaged in buſineſs, or labour, if we deſire to be more than Chriſtians in name—if we deſire, when we leave this world to go to a better—let us keep always in mind the great *end and deſign* of the goſpel—that it was intended to draw us to eternal happineſs hereafter, by making our lives pure and holy here. The leſs any of you hath of this world's goods, let him make it up by having more of the next; aſſuring yourſelves, that he who has religion has every thing; but that he who lives without religion, whatever elſe he may poſſeſs, *is dead while he liveth.* He is in a conſtant dream, miſtaking falſehood for truth, and fancies for realities; or, as it is well expreſſed in ſcripture, he is *walking about in a vain ſhadow, and diſquieting himſelf in vain.*

SERMON XIX.

MARK, i. 15.

VII. REPENT YE, AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.

HAVING conſidered the *general* intention of the Chriſtian religion, I ſhall now ſhew you, how we are to meet that *intention*—or, in other words, what thoſe *conditions* are, which God Almighty expects from us as Chriſtians.

The Chriſtian religion is often repreſented in the New Teſtament, as a covenant, which God hath been graciouſly pleaſed to make with man. God promiſes his holy ſpirit, pardon, and everlaſting happineſs; if we, on *our* part perform the *conditions* which he requires.

Theſe *conditions* are commonly reduced to two words, *faith* and *repentance*; or, which is the ſame thing, *faith* and *obedience*; becauſe true repentance

pentance produces obedience, and obedience includes repentance.

Now *faith*, in the firſt place, is abſolutely neceſſary, before we can become Chriſtians. Many people include truſt in God, reſignation, and other virtues in their idea of faith. And ſo indeed they may, in one ſenſe; becauſe, if our faith be ſincere, it produces them all. But I am here ſpeaking of faith, merely as it implies *belief*: and, in this ſenſe, we muſt firſt believe in Chriſt—we muſt take him for our Lord and maſter, before we can obey his commands. Simple faith therefore, founded on evidence, is neceſſarily the firſt ſtep towards being a Chriſtian.

It is neceſſarily the firſt ſtep, not only in the Chriſtian religion, but in every other religion. The heathen, who worſhipped many gods, would never have performed that worſhip, if he had not believed in thoſe gods. And the Jew, who worſhipped the God of Iſrael, according to the law of Moſes, would never have paid that worſhip, if he had not believed in the lawgiver who enjoined it.—In the ſame way, faith, or a belief in Jeſus Chriſt, the divine author of our religion, is the firſt ſtep required of Chriſtians.

Now, in the early times of Chriſtianity, when men had been bred up in falſe opinions of religion, and had been long prejudiced in favour of thoſe falſe opinions, it was a matter of ſome difficulty to bring them to reject, what they had ſo long valued, and to give themſelves up to a new maſter. It was no eaſy matter to make them believe, that Jeſus Chriſt, the ſon of a carpenter, who was crucified like a common malefactor, was the Saviour of the world: and, therefore, Chriſt not only laid a great ſtreſs on faith, but thought it neceſſary to work many miracles to command, as it were, the belief of mankind. This was indeed one great end of the miracles he wrought; and, accordingly, on his working a miracle, we are generally informed, that ſuch and ſuch perſons believed through the evidence of it.

In theſe later days, though we have not the evidence of ſuch mighty works performed before our eyes to command our faith; yet, on the other hand, we have all the evidence we can reaſonably deſire, and have none of theſe prejudices to get the better of, which the early Chriſtians had. We are bred up from our infancy in the faith of Chriſt, and have little knowledge of any religious opinions, except

except thoſe of the goſpel. One ſhould think, therefore, it were no difficult matter for us to believe in Chriſt: and indeed, I doubt not, but every one of you believes, in general, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to die for our ſins—that he roſe again from the dead—and that through the merits of his death we ſhall be ſaved, if we earneſtly repent, and endeavour to obey his laws.

But ſtill you may believe all this, without having that faith, which makes ſo great a part of religion:—that is, your faith or your belief, may be ſo general, ſo undetermined, ſo weak, as to make no impreſſion upon you. The ſcriptures ſpeak of a *dead faith*—that is, of ſuch a faith, as hath no effect upon our hearts.

Now faith, without practice, in matters of life, as well as in religion, is very common. The intemperate man, for inſtance, really believes, that by eating and drinking to exceſs, he muſt neceſſarily lay the foundation of diſeaſe; yet he ſtill indulges. His belief is not ſtrong enough to get the better of the temptation. Nay, in many caſes, when our belief amounts even to demonſtration, we are ſtill uninfluenced. Though we all as firmly believe we ſhall die, as we believe we are now alive; yet

how few live in a way in which they ſhould wiſh to die?

A Chriſtian, therefore, you ſee, may have a ſort of general faith, which is not ſtrong enough to exert itſelf in religious duty. True Chriſtian faith *muſt* produce a good heart, and a good life. As the great end and deſign of Chriſtianity, was to purify our nature, and make us in the ſcripture-language *new creatures*; ſo faith is the great mean, by which this holy renewal is to be effected. If our faith be *ſufficiently ſtrong* in Jeſus Chriſt—if we *firmly believe* all that he did and ſuffered for us—if we *receive him in our hearts*, as our Lord and maſter, and *thoroughly believe* that without him we have no title to everlaſting happineſs—we ſhall then be ready to obey all his commands—we ſhall receive his holy goſpel, and ſteadily endeavour to conform our lives to it—we ſhall practiſe all the refined precepts of Chriſtianity—we ſhall love our neighbour as ourſelves—we ſhall love our enemies—we ſhall be humble, and ready to take up our croſs after Chriſt—we ſhall be dead to the honours and wealth of this world—and do our duty in all ſtations of life, *as to the Lord, and not unto man.*

We may be good moral men, as the world goes, without faith; we may be upright in our dealings, generous,

generous, and friendly, and poſſeſs many amiable and pleaſing qualities—we may be temperate and ſober, and regular in our deportment: all this may be attained without faith.—But we cannot be Chriſtians without it. We cannot practiſe thoſe refined duties I have been mentioning to you without it; becauſe, as theſe are taught only in the goſpel, they muſt ſpring entirely from faith in the goſpel.—Nor indeed can we practiſe any duties in a Chriſtian ſenſe without it: for if they are not practiſed on Chriſtian motives; however a gracious God may accept them, they are not Chriſtian virtues.

Thus then, you ſee, faith is the great mean of purifying our nature, by making us conformable to the ſpirit of the goſpel. Unleſs we believe firmly in the truth and importance of what our Lord has taught us, we cannot in earneſt conform our lives to the practice of it.

Hence, therefore, the great diſpute about faith, and works, ſeems a matter that might eaſily be adjuſted. One lays the ſtreſs on faith, another on works; whereas, in fact, they cannot be ſeparated. True faith *muſt* produce works; and if the works be truly Chriſtian, they *muſt* ſpring from faith.

But now, my brethren, in this ſinful ſtate, no man, with all his faith, and all his works, can attain that height of purity which Chriſtianity enjoins. The goſpel therefore generally uſeth the word *repentance* inſtead of *obedience*, as being more conformable to the nature of this world. We are enjoined to obey the goſpel as well as we can; but the beſt of our obedience is but a ſtate of continual repentance; I ſhall endeavour, therefore, to explain to you the ſcripture-doctrine of repentance, which is ſo often conſidered as one of the great conditions of our ſalvation.

Properly ſpeaking, there are two kinds of repentance. One belongs to great and notorious ſinners; that is, to the worſt of men; the other (of which I am now ſpeaking) belongs to all mankind, even to the beſt.

When a man has been guilty of any great and crying ſins, as murder, adultery, perjury, or theft, which a man can hardly commit, without being loſt to all ſenſe of God and religion—or when a man, though he have not been guilty of any of theſe crying ſins, has never thought of religion at all, nor of the care of his ſoul, nor of any thing of a ſerious kind, but hath given himſelf wholly

wholly up to a life of pleaſure, or a life of buſineſs, as his worldly circumſtances may have led him—the repentance of ſuch people, means an *entire* change of life—new principles muſt be laid—every thing they have learned muſt, in a manner, be unlearned; and their hearts and behaviour muſt all take a new form. This, mixed with high degrees of contrition, is the repentance of the notorious ſinner, or the worldly man. A total converſion muſt take place; he is in a heathen ſtate. He hath yet no religion. *The Ethiopian muſt change his ſkin, and the Leopard his ſpots.*

This ſevere repentance however, I hope, none here, who attend the houſe of God, have occaſion for. But, in a leſs degree, even the beſt of us, my brethren, ſtand in need of daily repentance. The beſt man, when he looks into himſelf, ſees evidently enough, that he has *followed*, in the words of our church-confeſſion, *too much the devices and deſires of his own heart—that he has left many things undone, which he ought to have done; and done as many which he ought not to have done:* or, in other words, that his whole life muſt neceſſarily be a conſtant courſe of repentance.

But now, in this matter, there is an opening to miſtake—I hope only to wilful miſtake. How-

ever let us guard againſt it. The looſe Chriſtian may be willing perhaps to think, that as his whole life muſt thus neceſſarily be a courſe of repentance, and that it is even ſuppoſed in ſcripture, that it muſt be ſuch, he may, under that idea, take liberties in practice, which are very inconſiſtent with his religion; if he be only careful, that his repentance ſhall follow the tranſgreſſion.

If he ſeriouſly make this excuſe, let him conſider, that if he ſin *wilfully*—with his *eyes open*, or *continue* in any *habitual ſin*, he is not in a ſtate of religion: he requires that firſt kind of repentance mentioned—an *entire change of life*.

The ſins here meant, of which a Chriſtian ought to be daily repenting, are ſuch, as through the frailty of human nature, he cannot avoid—*ignorances and negligences*, as our church-ſervice calls them—not taking proper care perhaps, at all times, to inform ourſelves—inattention to our duty—ſurprizes on our temper and paſſions—coldneſs in our prayers—worldly anxieties—too much love for earthly things, and a variety of other offences, which, more or leſs, will inſinuate themſelves; and cannot, with all our care, be totally avoided. All theſe corruptions of nature, however, may hope for pardon, through the merits

merits of our bleſſed Redeemer, if we ſtrive againſt them, and endeavour to check them, before they form into habits. But ſuch is the deceitful nature of ſin, and ſuch our aptneſs to deceive ourſelves, that without conſtant attention, this cannot be done. The great point is ſincerity. The repentance of many people is little more than a ſenſe of the preſent inconvenience of ſin. Their ſins occaſion ſome diſtreſs, which they are willing to avoid; and, therefore, they repent, as they call it. A man gets drunk, for inſtance, and feels in conſequence the incovenience; ſo he reſolves to be ſober, and never to run into ſuch miſchief again.—Another man has been ſometimes a little diſhoneſt, but has thus far fortunately eſcaped diſcovery. He has lately, however, heard of ſome others, who have been found out in their knaviſh tricks, and have ſuffered for them—ſo he reſolves, in good time, to be an honeſt man. And indeed it is well, if a man can keep himſelf ſober and honeſt at any rate.—But give me leave, my brethren, to tell you, that this is not repentance. For if the firſt could get drunk, or the latter be a knave, without any worldly inconvenience, there is no principle yet in theſe men, that would deter them.

them. There is nothing yet, you ſee, that leads to the *repentance of the heart.* I have heard of many a penitent in a gaol, and on a ſick-bed, who returned to their bad courſes. That repentance alone is ſincere, which is grounded on a real hatred to ſin, and a real deſire to obey God; and ſhews its ſincerity by a reformation both of heart and life.—Our repentance may even, for a time, be ſincere, and yet not be effectual. We may be heartily ſorry for our ſins, and may be thoroughly determined, at the time, to leave them; but new temptations may ariſe, and get the better of our reſolutions, and betray us again into our old vices. Our Saviour's parable of the ſeed ſcattered upon the ſurface of a weedy ſoil, applies directly to ſuch penitents. Their reſolutions are good, but they cannot hold them; they are entangled in the cares and pleaſures of the world; and all their good intentions are choked: ſo that we cannot watch ourſelves in the article of repentance too cloſely.

Thus then, my brethren, *faith* and *repentance*, through the merits of Chriſt, are the grand conditions

ditions and terms of our ſalvation.—May we all ſeriouſly conſider them as ſuch, and make it the great buſineſs of our lives to ſtrengthen our *faith*, and through its efficacy, to purify our *lives!*

SERMON XX.

MAT. vi. 15.

VIII. IF YE FORGIVE NOT MEN THEIR TRESPASSES, NEITHER WILL MY HEAVENLY FATHER FORGIVE YOUR TRESPASSES.

THOUGH a correct life, founded on faith and repentance, is thus, in general, held out in the goſpel, as the great ground through Chriſt, of our acceptance with God; yet as there is great ſtreſs laid in ſcripture on certain marks or evidences of the ſincerity of our repentance, I thought it right, before I cloſe this part of my ſubject, to lay them particularly before you. What I would chiefly call to your attention, is the forgiveneſs of injuries—reſtitution—and the neceſſity of increaſing in habits of goodneſs.

The

The duty of forgiving injuries is ſo expreſsly required from Chriſtians, that it was in ancient times one of the diſtinguiſhing marks of Chriſtianity. The paſſions of malice and revenge, which the heathen nations indulged without ſcruple, the Chriſtian was ordered entirely to conquer: and God Almighty, to ſhew his particular diſpleaſure againſt an unforgiving temper, has made our forgiving others an expreſs condition of our own forgiveneſs. The text is full to this purpoſe; and in many other parts of the New Teſtament, we are told, that unleſs we forgive others, we muſt not expect forgiveneſs ourſelves. But there is one paſſage, in which our Saviour ſeems to have dwelt on this point with more than ordinary particularity. The paſſage, I mean, is the parable of the ſervant, who was indebted ten thouſand talents to his Lord. His Lord was well inclined to forgive him: but the ſervant prevented his Lord's goodneſs by his own implacable temper. His Lord therefore puniſhed him, we read, in the ſame way, in which he had treated his fellow ſervant.—And that we may not make any miſapplication in this matter; but know exactly for what purpoſe our Saviour delivered the parable; he adds, *ſo likewiſe*

ſhall

ſhall my heavenly father do unto you, if you from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their treſpaſſes. Obſerve the expreſſion, *from your hearts.* It is not only forbidden to abſtain from all *outward acts* of revenge, but to abſtain from all *inclination* to it.

Thus we find, that if we allow malicious and revengeful thoughts, let our repentance be what it will, it wants that mark of its ſincerity, without which it cannot be accepted by God.

Even in the Lord's prayer, ſhort as it is, this doctrine is ſtrongly inculcated. *Forgive us our treſpaſſes,* AS WE *forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us.*

I could wiſh you alſo to be convinced, that this doctrine is not only *ſcriptural*, but *reaſonable*. For God enjoins us no duty in ſcripture, which, truly conſidered, is not equally enjoined by reaſon: for the ſame God is the author both of reaſon and ſcripture.

Now, as heaven is a place where only the kind affections prevail, anger, malice, and revenge can, of courſe, have no exiſtence there. As the Chriſtian religion therefore is meant to prepare us for heaven, it forms in our minds ſuch diſpoſitions, and gives us ſuch directions as are ſuited to that bleſſed

bleſſed place. It is certainly therefore as *reaſonable* that we ſhould exerciſe ourſelves in thoſe things which are to fit us for heaven, as that a man ſhould learn the arts of huſbandry; before he attempt to till the ground; or ſtudy the law before he can practiſe it: for a man who has been bred in one buſineſs cannot be more diſqualified for another, than he who indulges the paſſions of anger, and hatred, and malice, can be prepared for the happineſs of heaven.—The forgiveneſs of injuries is likewiſe a reaſonable duty, as it tends to calm the mind by ridding it of thoſe boiſterous paſſions, which, above all other things, diſturb it.

The next duty which may be conſidered as a neceſſary part of repentance, is *reſtitution*. By reſtitution is meant, reſtoring again to another whatever we may have taken from him by any fraudulent or violent means. This muſt ſurely appear neceſſary, as otherwiſe a man muſt live in the *conſtant practice*, if I may ſo call it, of the crime he has committed.

Now a particular ſtreſs is laid upon reſtitution, becauſe the nature of *injuſtice* is ſomewhat different from that of *other ſins*. Such ſins as are committed

merely againſt God admit no reſtitution. You ſwear—you blaſpheme—you prophane the Sabbath: all theſe are offences againſt God. But they admit no *reſtitution*. All you can do, is to repent. To God you can make no other *reſtitution*. But acts of injuſtice to your neighbour *may* be farther atoned for. The damage may be repaired, and therefore certainly ought.

In the Jewiſh law reſtitution was ſtrictly required, even with the addition of a fifth part*. And though in the New Teſtament ſo much ſtreſs is not laid upon it, as on many other things; yet it is only becauſe it is one of thoſe firſt principles of juſtice, which needs not to be inſiſted on.—When it is caſually mentioned in the New Teſtament, it is mentioned only as the firſt ſtep of repentance, and that too in great ſinners.

We have a remarkable inſtance in the caſe of Zaccheus. This man had been bred to the buſineſs of a publican; that is, a collector of the Roman tribute; which was thought one of the moſt diſreputable of all employments. It was a buſineſs full of temptation; and, of courſe, of knavery: and it appears that Zaccheus had given into many of the temptations of his profeſſion;

* See Levit. vi. 5.

and

and ſeems indeed to have been a very ordinary man*. On hearing, however, of Jeſus—the doctrines which he preached, and the miracles which he wrought; this miſled publican was ſomewhat ſtaggered in the enjoyment of his diſhoneſt gains, and began to conſider in earneſt the danger of the wicked life he had ſpent. Full of theſe thoughts, he longed much for an opportunity to ſee Jeſus, and converſe with him. At length his inclination was gratified. He converſed with his Saviour, and became a new man.—On his converſion, we find the firſt ſtep he took, was to ſtand forth, and make open confeſſion of his wicked life; and to promiſe, by way of atonement for the many acts of injuſtice he had been guilty of, not only to make reſtitution, but to reſtore four-fold.—Now this caſe of Zaccheus is no way particularly commended in Scripture; but is rather conſidered as a *thing of courſe*, on his reſolution to become a real Chriſtian.

Another great ſinner, who ſtands recorded in Scripture for making reſtitution, is Judas Iſcariot.

* Some people think his character was good; but the whole tenor of the narration, I think, makes it otherwiſe: the people immediately ſaid, Jeſus was *gone to be a gueſt with a ſinner*. And our Saviour ſays, *This day is ſalvation come to his houſe*, and that *the Son of Man was come to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt*.

He had long lived in the habit of cheating his bleſſed maſter and his fellow-diſciples of the little ſtock they had for their daily expences. *He was a thief, and carried the bag, and took out* for his own uſe (for ſo it ſhould be tranſlated,) *what was put therein.* Theſe thefts, however, did not touch his hardened conſcience. At leaſt, we meet with no account of his reſtitution. But when, from theſe ſteps he went on to greater—when he carried his wicked love of money to ſo dreadful a height as to betray his bleſſed maſter, for the ſake of thirty pieces of ſilver; though it is the common opinion of divines that he carried his repentance no farther than horror and deſpair, yet he ſurely carried it far enough to make reſtitution. He brought again the thirty pieces of ſilver, and threw them down in the temple, as unjuſt gains. So that, you ſee, reſtitution is conſidered here as no ſuch mighty matter. When you have *made reſtitution*, you have yet gone only as far as Judas Iſcariot went.

Upon the whole, reſtitution appears to be ſo much a part of repentance, that we may venture to ſay, no repentance can be truly ſincere without it, when it is in our power to make it.—Perhaps you may ſay, your whole fortune, in a manner,

has been acquired by ill-gotten gain. If you reſtore it, you reduce yourſelf to little or nothing.—As to that, you are at option. You muſt judge, whether you think your ill-gotten gain, or the kingdom of heaven is more valuable: but I ſee not how you can enjoy both. If you have a true ſenſe of religion, you will ſubmit even to beggary, rather than die under the guilt of knavery.

Laſtly, the ſincerity of our repentance ſhould be ſhewn by our increaſing in habits of goodneſs. A Chriſtian ſhould never be at a ſtand: he ſhould always, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, be *preſſing towards the mark of his high calling*. The New Teſtament is full of exhortations to this purpoſe. We are exhorted to *grow in grace*—to *go on unto perfection*—to add one *virtue to another*; and, in ſhort, never to ſuppoſe, we are perfect, as there is always a ſtate of perfection beyond what we can poſſibly have attained. It is not an eaſy matter to conquer the bad habits of corrupt nature. We have much to do, and ſhould always be endeavouring to do what we can. It is the great advantage of our having in the Scriptures a perfect rule, which the beſt of our endeavours cannot reach; becauſe there

will always be a point ſtill higher to excite us fa-ther. A Chriſtian ought always of courſe, there-fore, to be endeavouring after a ſtate of higher perfection than he has yet attained.

Indeed if a man does not *endeavour* to grow better, but *ſuffers himſelf to be at a ſtand*, he cannot be in earneſt. When we are truly in earneſt, we never ſet bounds to our inclinations. Did you ever hear of a covetous man ſetting bounds to his deſire of getting money? Never certainly, if he be in earneſt. Neither ſhould we, if we were in earneſt, ſet bounds to our endeavours to grow better.—We may take it for granted, therefore, that it is ex-pected from us, as a proof of the ſincerity of our repentance, to make it our endeavour to *grow in grace*—to get the better of our bad inclinations by degrees—and to be advancing continually more towards perfection.

Thus, I have endeavoured to explain to you the terms of our acceptance with God. It is a weighty ſubject, my brethren, and you will one day find it to be ſo. And yet, alas! how little does it affect the beſt of us! How much more are we inclined to try a thouſand arts to *bargain*, if I may ſo call it, with

with heaven, and endeavour to gain ſalvation, not on God's conditions, but our own. We ſeem to think God Almighty ſhould rather come to our terms, than we to his. The young man in the Goſpel ſeems to have had ſentiments of this kind. He came to Chriſt to inquire what he was to do to inherit eternal life? He had a deſire to inherit eternal life, (as, no doubt, every body in his ſenſes muſt have,) and he wiſhed to get the authority of Chriſt on his ſide, in order to his inheriting eternal life *in his own way*. But his experiment failed. Chriſt tried him on the article of love to the world. He did not like the terms, and therefore choſe rather to go on in his ſins.

Let not us follow ſo bad an example; but in *our* inquiries on this great point, let us aſſure ourſelves that no terms but thoſe of the Goſpel will be accepted—and that on theſe alone, through the merits of Chriſt, we muſt depend for all our hopes of everlaſting ſalvation.

SERMON XXI.

2 PETER, i. 4.

IX. WHEREBY ARE GIVEN UNTO US EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES, THAT BY THESE YOU MIGHT BE PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE.

HAVING, in my two laſt diſcourſes, treated on the *conditions* which are injoined on *our* part of this covenant, I propoſe now to ſhew you what God has been graciouſly pleaſed to promiſe on *his* part—the *aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, pardon of our ſins, and everlaſting life.*

He hath firſt promiſed us the *aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit.* Even in heathen times it was an opinion, that mankind was aſſiſted by the Deity. When

When any action greater than common was performed, it was always aſcribed to the aſſiſtance of the gods; which ſhews the idea of heavenly aſſiſtance is, at leaſt, agreeable to the rude opinions of nature. However oppoſite it might be to the prejudices of men's ſenſes, they ſtill believed it.

That the Jews held the ſame opinion we need not wonder. Their continued intercourſe with heaven, and the frequent appearance of angels, through at leaſt their early hiſtory, made ideas of this kind familiar to them.—And indeed it ſeems very probable, from the reaſon of the thing, and the general opinion of mankind, that God always did aſſiſt his faithful ſervants, in all ages of the world. If the Jew, and even the heathen held this opinion, ſurely the Chriſtian has ſtill better grounds for believing it. On this head the Scripture is very full; it every where inſiſts on two great points—our want of aſſiſtance, and God's readineſs to afford it.

In the firſt place, it impreſſes on us the melancholy truth, that through the great corruption of our nature, we ſtand in daily need of aſſiſtance. We are aſſured, that *in us dwelleth no good thing*, and that, at beſt, *we are only unprofitable ſervants*. And indeed, if the Scripture did not hold up this

glaſs

glaſs before us, we need only look into ourſelves to know the truth. We all know how much readier bad thoughts are to riſe in our minds than good thoughts—how prone our appetites and paſſions are to intemperance, to ſelf-love, to anger, to luſt—how inclined our hearts are to falſehood, to hypocriſy, to pride, to envy, to hatred, and revenge.

Now theſe bad diſpoſitions continually working in us, have nothing to counterbalance them but the grace of God. Our reaſon, we ſee, is certainly inſufficient. God hath graciouſly therefore promiſed, that if we ſtrive to get the better of theſe wrongneſſes of our nature—if we are humble Chriſtians, and endeavour to pleaſe him, he will aſſiſt us with his Holy Spirit, which (as it is well expreſſed in one of our church collects) *will put into our hearts good deſires, and bring the ſame to good effect.*

Even among us frail creatures, when we ſee a perſon teachable, and modeſt, and deſirous of aſſiſtance, it is a great inducement to give it. And can we conceive a holy and merciful God will do leſs? Can we conceive that he will refuſe to aſſiſt his pious ſervants, who are endeavouring, as much as they can, to pleaſe him? That he will ſee them

wandering

wandering faithfully and painfully, amidſt the difficulties and ſelf-denials in which his ſervice engages them, and yet lend them no aſſiſtance? It is againſt reaſon to conceive it.—We have every proof, therefore, that Scripture and reaſon can give us, firſt, that we want aſſiſtance; and, ſecondly, that God will afford it.

But then we muſt ever carefully remember, that the Holy Spirit of God is not forced upon us. We muſt make ourſelves worthy of it, before we can receive its aſſiſtance. We muſt make our hearts *temples of the Holy Ghoſt*, before it will dwell in them; and muſt *draw nigh to God*, before he will draw nigh to us.

In what way the Holy Spirit of God acts upon us, we know not. Our whole life, indeed, is only one inviſible union with God. If he withdraw that power, whatever it is that keeps us alive—we die. How this power acts we know not; yet we are aſſured it does act. God's intercourſe with us by his Holy Spirit, is equally certain, and equally inconceivable. A queſtion of this kind was once brought to our Saviour, and he anſwered it thus: *The wind bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the ſound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: ſo is every one who is born of the*

the Spirit. As if he had ſaid, the Spirit of God works inviſibly upon the minds of men, ſomething like the operation of the wind, which you cannot ſee, however violently it may blow; yet you are well aſſured it does blow, from its effects.

Thus much for the aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit, which I have conſidered as the firſt promiſe of the Goſpel. But this would have been of little uſe, unleſs God had farther promiſed us the pardon of our ſins; for after all our endeavours, the beſt of us have many offences, which call for pardon from the throne of God. The pardoning of ſin, therefore, was the great point, in which, I have repeatedly told you, the Chriſtian religion differs from all other religions. No other religion ever pretended to offer it. It was the language even of the Jewiſh religion, the only religion which claimed, in any degree, the promiſes of God, *This do, and live:* do your whole duty, commit no ſin, and you may be ſaved.—But God, who knew what was in man, knew this rigid condition could never be performed—that man could never do his *whole duty.*—The Goſpel, therefore, is a gracious abatement of this rigid condition; and though we have

every

every reaſon to believe Chriſt's death will avail to the pardon of all mankind, both before and after his death, yet we Chriſtians alone have theſe bleſſed hopes ſecured to us by a promiſe. If we are only ſincere in forſaking our ſins, they ſhall not, we are graciouſly aſſured, prevent our ſalvation. So that the door of mercy is not ſhut againſt the greateſt ſinner. If he is brought at length to a full ſenſe of his ſins, and a ſteady reſolution to forſake them, he need not deſpair.—Only he muſt remember, that his repentance *muſt* be ſincere; and that he may be deceived in this matter, without great care. It is not a ſorrow for the bad conſequences of ſin in this world, nor a fear of puniſhment in the next, that is repentance; but a thorough change of life—of heart, and life.

In what way the death of Chriſt made atonement for us, and procured our pardon, we know no more than we do in what way the Holy Spirit of God acts upon us. It is one of thoſe difficult queſtions in religion which we can never underſtand: it does not therefore concern us. If God had thought it neceſſary for us to know, he would either have given us faculties capable of underſtanding it, or have made it plain to ſuch faculties as we have. But he has thought it proper to do neither.

neither. In the Scriptures this doctrine is fully contained; and if we believe in the Scriptures, the truth of which I have endeavoured to prove to you, we muſt believe in this doctrine alſo. If we give up the Scriptures, we give up Chriſtianity, and there is an end of all argument. We often truſt the promiſe of an honeſt man, though we may not clearly underſtand the force of the promiſe: let us at leaſt pay equal regard to the promiſes of God.

But neither the aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit, nor the pardon of our ſins, would be of uſe to us, unleſs God had been graciouſly pleaſed to promiſe us the laſt great bleſſing of our religion, everlaſting happineſs.

In what the happineſs of that great change from this world to the next conſiſts, we know not. And what is more, the grandeur of the idea conſiſts in our not being able to fathom; it as thoſe parts of the ocean are of courſe the moſt profound, which the mariner's line cannot reach. We have leſs than a mariner's line in founding the depths of eternity; we can only reach the ſhallows that lie around us—the grandeur of eternity we muſt look

at

at with the eye of faith. But though God Almighty hath thus ſpread a curtain between us and that world of happineſs he hath graciouſly provided for us; yet we are enabled to ſee enough through it to engage all our gratitude and affection. We know, in that world we ſhall at leaſt be eaſed of all the diſtreſſes we meet with here. Theſe diſtreſſes ariſe either from the mind, or the body—from the falſe purſuits of our paſſions and appetites—or from the unavoidable circumſtances of a ſtate of trial. Our diſtreſſes from both theſe ſources muſt of courſe be removed, becauſe we know that all their cauſes muſt ceaſe. We ſhall have no ungoverned paſſions and appetites to diſturb us; all will be ſerenity and peace. We need fear no improper objects to lead us aſtray, nor any thing to diſcompoſe or interrupt that calm and tranquillity which we ſhall then feel.

The diſtreſſes, again, which ariſe from ſickneſs, infirmity, and decay, will all be over. All theſe ariſe from our mortal ſtate, and when mortality ceaſes, all its caſualties and unavoidable evils will of courſe ceaſe with it.

Laſtly, the diſtreſſes which ariſe from low circumſtances, from hard labour, from poverty, and that contempt which often attends it, will no longer

diſturb

diſturb us. All will then be equal: thoſe diſtinctions only will remain, which different degrees of virtue and vice occaſion. The poor, who have borne their poverty as they ought, and turned it by reſignation into religion, will then be ſuperior to thoſe who had better advantages, and made a worſe uſe of them.

Thus, as the happineſs of a future ſtate muſt, at leaſt, conſiſt in the removal of all thoſe diſtreſſes which afflict us here, let us look up to it as the end of all our labour—the ſweetener of all our toils—our comfort in every affliction—and our great defence againſt the fear of ſickneſs, old age, and death.—We cannot conceive that God will take us from a better place to a worſe, when he promiſes to reward us; but certainly from a worſe to a better.

How much higher the happineſs of a future ſtate may be carried beyond the removal of all our worldly diſtreſſes, we know not; but we have reaſon to ſuppoſe, that in this great change many new kinds of happineſs will be opened to us, of which we have now no conception. The infinity of God's power, and the various modes in which infinite power can produce happineſs, though not within the compaſs of our comprehenſion, ſhould be a conſtant ſource of our grateful contemplation.

Since

Since therefore, my brethren, God Almighty, in his goodneſs has been graciouſly pleaſed to enter into theſe conditions with us, let us endeavour to make ourſelves worthy of them.

Are we promiſed the aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit? let us always endeavour to keep our hearts pure for the entrance of ſuch a gueſt. We put our houſes in order to receive an earthly viſitant, and ſhall we make no preparation to receive the Spirit of God? Or can we ſuppoſe that bleſſed Spirit will inhabit any heart, where paſſion, and violence, and worldly thoughts, and envy, and malice, bear ſway?

Again, Are we promiſed pardon and grace? let us always, with the promiſe, remember the conditions, and make ourſelves as worthy of pardon as our moſt contrite repentance can make us.

Laſtly, Are we promiſed everlaſting life? let us live as if we believed ourſelves on our journey towards our everlaſting home; and may God of his infinite mercy grant, we *may ſo paſs through things temporal, as finally to obtain the things that are eternal, through Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord!*

SERMON XXII.

ROM. ii. 8.

X. INDIGNATION AND WRATH, TRIBULATION AND ANGUISH, UPON EVERY SOUL OF MAN, THAT DOETH EVIL.

IN my laſt diſcourſe I conſidered the promiſes of the Goſpel: but if promiſes alone had been held out, it is much to be feared they would have had little effect on the bulk of mankind. The generality of men have no reliſh for the happineſs of another world. They are careleſs about its promiſes; and if they could enjoy the happineſs of this world to the end of their lives, it is all they deſire. They would be contented after death to give up all claim to the promiſes.

As this is the caſe with great numbers of mankind, it hath pleaſed God, beſides the promiſe of future

future happineſs to thoſe who obey him, to add the threatening of future miſery to thoſe who do not obey him. It hath ſeemed good to him to work upon their fears as well as their hopes, and to threaten *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man, that doeth evil.*

In the following diſcourſe, therefore, I ſhall *firſt* endeavour to give you the Scripture account of future puniſhments; and ſhall *ſecondly* point out the effect which this doctrine is intended to produce.

And firſt, with regard to the *nature* of future puniſhments, I ſhall juſt ſet before you a few paſſages from Scripture. We have no other authority. There we are told, *the wicked are reſerved to the day of deſtruction—they ſhall be turned into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched—they ſhall be tormented with fire and brimſtone, and have no reſt neither by day nor night; and the ſmoke of their torment ſhall aſcend up for ever and ever—there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth—the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, ſhall ſay to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth on the throne.*

Now theſe, my brethren, are juſt *plain Scripture expreſſions*. Numberleſs other paſſages of the ſame import might eaſily be added to them; for this is a very ſmall collection of what might be produced. They are not the opinions of this or of that divine—they are not deſcriptions wrought up from fancy—but they are the plain *literal* words of Scripture.

And now, let me aſk any of you who pretends to have the faith of a Chriſtian, What are we to ſuppoſe ſuch expreſſions as theſe mean?—Are we to ſuppoſe that the word of God throws them out to terrify weak people?—that, in fact, they mean nothing, or next to nothing, and are merely intended to keep the world in awe by vain fears?

I ſuppoſe none of you will believe this; or conceive that the God of truth could have recourſe to ſuch low, paltry expedients, as would diſgrace even a human government.

If then we are to ſuppoſe theſe threatenings have a real meaning, the next queſtion is, What is that meaning? What is the ſenſe which we are to put upon ſuch expreſſions? Are we to put the *literal* ſenſe upon them, and ſuppoſe that future puniſhments will conſiſt of lakes compoſed of fire and brimſtone, as deſcribed in Scripture?

I ſuppoſe not. I ſhould not contend for ſuch an interpretation. Many things which the Scriptures think proper to mention cannot, as I have often told you, be exactly deſcribed. Our faculties could not comprehend them; and therefore the Scriptures are obliged to deſcribe them *by* ſuch things, and to compare them *to* ſuch things as we *do* underſtand. Thus when they deſcribe the happineſs of heaven, if they ſpoke of it exactly as it is, we could no more comprehend it, than a child could comprehend the beauties of a fine picture. Its faculties are not adapted to underſtand them. In order, therefore, to make the happineſs of heaven, in ſome degree, intelligible, the Scriptures compare it to ſuch things as we *do* underſtand. They compare it to *a fountain of living water*, or *a crown of glory*, or *the brightneſs of the firmament*, or to ſomething of which we have the cleareſt conception; and which, at the ſame time, either from its purity, its ſplendour, its grandeur, or other quality, gives us ſome idea of the nature of it.

It is thus alſo we may ſuppoſe they deſcribe the miſery of future puniſhments. As they cannot explain to us exactly the *nature* of future puniſhment, becauſe we could not underſtand it, they compare it to ſuch things as we do underſtand.

Well then: on a ſuppoſition the Scriptures are not to be interpreted literally in this matter, let us conſider next in what way they are to be interpreted.

We may lay it down as an unexceptionable rule, that when they mean to inform us, they give us the cleareſt ideas they can. In the caſe before us, the ideas they raiſe are certainly of the moſt dreadful kind; we muſt ſuppoſe, therefore, that they mean to give us the idea of ſomething very dreadful. Leſs than this we cannot ſuppoſe. We conclude, therefore, that when the Scriptures compare future puniſhments to our being plunged into a lake of fire and brimſtone, they mean, at leaſt, to make us underſtand they are of a very dreadful nature; and that, whatever the *real* nature of future puniſhments may be, nothing can explain them better to *us* than theſe horrible ideas.

But now in the paſſages which I have juſt read to you from Scripture, there is another idea ſuggeſted, beſides the *greatneſs* of the puniſhment; and that is, the *continuance* of it. It is called, *the worm, that never dieth—the fire, that is never quenched;* and ſo forth.

The next queſtion, therefore, is, How are we to interpret *theſe* paſſages? Are we to conceive them

them as expreſſing only ſome long period of time? Or are we to conſider them in a literal ſenſe? And that their meaning is, that future puniſhments are really to laſt for ever?

Many people, it is true, have been led (but I apprehend chiefly by their own wiſhes) to conſider them in the former ſenſe. I own, I ſee no grounds for ſuch an opinion from any rules of interpretation that I know. The *exact nature* of future puniſhments could not be literally explained to us; ſo the Scriptures were obliged, as I have juſt told you, to compare it to things that could be explained. But though there ſeems to have been a neceſſity for this in explaining the *nature* of future puniſhments, there ſeems to be none in explaining the *duration* of them. We can comprehend well enough what is meant by a thing's laſting for an hundred years, for inſtance; or for a thouſand years, or for ten thouſand. The Scriptures, therefore, had no occaſion here to uſe any language but the plaineſt, becauſe the *plaineſt* would be the *moſt intelligible*. So that by telling us that future puniſhments are to laſt for ever, if nothing more was meant than to expreſs a long period, the Scripture only miſleads us by a *figure*, when the *exact truth* would have been very plain.

But perhaps you will ſay, the Scripture purpoſely leaves it doubtful to keep us the more in fear.—Of that we know nothing. For myſelf, I ſhould not ſuppoſe ſuch a fallacy conſiſtent with the word of God: it generally, I believe, ſpeaks the plain truth; and if men will not believe it, they muſt be left at liberty.

But farther, the very ſame word in the original which is uſed to expreſs the duration of future *puniſhments* is uſed alſo to expreſs the duration of future *rewards**. Are we then to ſuppoſe that it here likewiſe means only ſome long period? Or are we to conſider future rewards as eternal, and future puniſhments as temporal, though the very ſame word is uſed to expreſs both? This, no doubt, in the opinion of many people, would be the moſt commodious way of interpreting Scripture; but whether it would be moſt agreeable to the juſt rules of interpretation, I much doubt.—Upon the whole, therefore, we ſeem to have every reaſon, (at leaſt ſo far as I can ſee,) to believe from the words of Scripture, that future rewards and future puniſhments are both eternal.

* Απελευσονται ουτοι εις κολασιν αιωνιον· οι δε δικαιοι εις ζωην αιωνιον. Mat. xxv. 46.

One

One thing is very plain, the heathen nations before Chriſtianity, believed, as far as they had any knowledge of theſe matters, that future puniſhments were eternal. Of this we have many inſtances; and this ſhews, at leaſt, that this doctrine is agreeable to the natural ſentiments of mankind*.

After all, however, it is our buſineſs to leave this great matter in the hands of God Almighty, whoſe *wiſdom* and *juſtice* govern all his works, and who will undoubtedly *do what is right*. There are different degrees of puniſhment, no doubt, as there are of reward, ſuited to the different degrees of virtue and vice; and *that* God, who holds the balance of the univerſe, will not only do us juſtice; but we ourſelves, we may be aſſured, in that great day, will acknowledge that juſtice.

Whatever difficulties, however, may attend our reaſonings on this ſubject, one point is very clear, that nothing can be more imprudent than to run any riſk in a matter of ſuch awful conſequence. It is certainly the ſafeſt way to *believe* that future

* See the ſixth book of Virgil, in which Theſeus, and other wicked perſons, are repreſented as ſuffering eternal puniſhment in Tartarus.

puniſhments

puniſhments are eternal, ſo that on this ſide of the belief, at leaſt, our intereſt lies.

Having thus ſhewn you what is revealed to us with regard to a future ſtate of puniſhment, let us now conſider, as a concluſion from the whole, the great effect which theſe awful denunciations are intended to produce.

There are ſerious moments in the lives of the moſt hardened men, when wickedneſs has run its courſe, and brought on miſery, as in ſome ſhape it always does—or when diſeaſe and the apprehenſions of death have worn down the ſpirits—or when afflictions and diſtreſs have put men out of love with the world.—In theſe moments they may look into themſelves—their conſciences may begin to ſtare them in the face—to ſet before them their guilt; and they may begin to think there is ſomething more in the terrors of damnation than they had before apprehended. Thus awakened by the judgments of another world, they may ſee things in a different light; they may deplore their ſins, and God may touch their hearts with his grace; and what was at firſt only fear and horror, may end in a ſincere and laſting repentance.

Others again may have no great crimes to anſwer for, but are totally given up to the world, and ſeek all their happineſs from it. They believe indeed in God; but their belief has little effect upon their lives. They have no truſt in God—no gratitude. They receive every thing, not as if it were given by him, but as if it were merely of their own procuring, or as if it were their due. They neither reverence him, nor pray to him. They believe alſo in a future ſtate, but they do not much like to think about it; they juſt believe it enough to fear it, but not enough to give up their thoughtleſs, or their pleaſurable, or their buſy lives, to obtain the happineſs of it. They believe in Chriſt, but they do not think it neceſſary to obſerve his laws. Yet ſtill many of theſe, it may be hoped, when they have run their giddy courſe, and have found that life, after all, has been a ſcene of folly and vanity, having nothing to draw them *back*, may begin to look *forward*. It may now perhaps be a ſtartling thought, that they are juſt upon the edge of eternity—their conſciences may begin to take an alarm in earneſt—their fears proportionably to ariſe. To enter eternity with that guilt about them which they now feel, is a thought which deſerves attention; and, by the mercy of God, it is never

never too late for repentance. With theſe reflections, and theſe fears, they may in earneſt be awakened into repentance—they may ſee God's mercy, and their Redeemer's love, and become ſincere penitents.

Thus then we ſee the natural effect of the fear of future puniſhment. It ſhould work upon us, as fear of every other kind does, to alarm us, and put us in a ſituation to avoid the threatened miſchief.

But now, my brethren, I hope you are enough informed, that if your repentance go no farther than fear, it is no repentance at all. It is nothing yet, you ſee, but the fear of damnation, and there is no more goodneſs in ſuch fear, than there is goodneſs in avoiding a precipice.

We all have our ſins, and muſt all, no doubt, more or leſs, have our fears. But ſtill the truly good man is not good through fear. Fear may have awakened him; but he would be good, whether future puniſhments exiſted, or not. He obeys God, not becauſe he threatens, but becauſe it is the ſupreme happineſs of man to devote all his actions to an infinitely wiſe and good Being, and to ſeek the guidance of his Holy Spirit. He truſts in Chriſt,

Chriſt, not becauſe of the condemnation which the Scripture threatens to all who deſpiſe their Saviour; but becauſe he feels the want of a Redeemer's mercy, and feels the excellence of Goſpel-laws; ſo that, as much as he can, he endeavours to make *his love ſo perfect as to caſt out fear*.—It is juſt thus in human affairs. You do not call him an honeſt man, who is honeſt merely becauſe he fears a gaol? By no means. You know well enough that ſuch a man has not even the ſeeds of honeſty in him. Remove the law, and he is a knave. Him only you call an honeſt man, who would be honeſt, whether there were a law againſt knavery, or not. Juſt ſo, he is the only good man in the eyes of God, who would wiſh to live a pious life, whether there were future puniſhments, or not.—May we truly conſider theſe things, and may God of his infinite mercy grant they may have a proper effect upon our lives, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord!

SERMON XXIII.

I JOHN, v. 6.

XI. THIS IS HE THAT CAME BY WATER AND BLOOD, EVEN JESUS CHRIST.

HAVING thus given you a *general view* of Chriſtianity, I ſhall not enter minutely into its precepts, as theſe have been the ordinary ſubjects of my diſcourſes from this place. One point, however, farther I think it neceſſary to touch upon, —the doctrine of the ſacraments; which ſhall be the ſubject of the following diſcourſe.

Our duty to God, our neighbour, and ourſelves, are duties, you know, which in their own nature are right. That it is right to worſhip and obey God—that it is right to be juſt and kind to our neighbour—and that it is right to be ſober, and temperate, with regard to ourſelves, no religious man ever doubted.

But

But beſides theſe duties, there are two obſervances enjoined by our religion, which are not like the duties juſt mentioned, of value in themſelves; but are rendered binding from being expreſsly appointed by our bleſſed Saviour. Theſe are the two rites of baptiſm, and the Lord's ſupper. Now though it be an indifferent thing in itſelf to be ſprinkled with water, or to eat and drink bread and wine; yet when theſe actions are enjoined by divine authority, as ſolemn parts of religion, they are rendered as binding as any other duties.

But though baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper receive their chief authority from a divine inſtitution, we are not to ſuppoſe they have no uſe in themſelves. I ſhall endeavour, therefore, to ſhew you their end and uſe.

The Chriſtian religion, humanly ſpeaking, may be called a covenant between God and man. Conditions, on both ſides, are promiſed.

Now in making a human covenant, you know certain outward forms are always thought neceſſary, to render it binding. If you and I enter into an agreement, in which we both promiſe certain conditions, the law requires there ſhould be ſome open act or ceremony, to ſpecify and confirm our agreement.

agreement. It muſt be written on ſtamped paper, for inſtance; it muſt be ſigned and ſealed, and executed before witneſſes.

Now in this covenant which God hath made with man, he hath graciouſly condeſcended to confirm it by theſe outward acts of baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper. On our part, they are the ſigns of our humbly accepting the gracious conditions of the Goſpel; and on God's, the merciful pledges of his performing that part of the covenant, which he has graciouſly promiſed.

When God entered into *covenant* with Abraham, he appointed the rite of circumciſion, as we are expreſsly told, for the ſame purpoſe. By that rite he aſſured Abraham, and it was a ſtanding pledge to aſſure his poſterity alſo, that God *had* entered into covenant with him, and would undoubtedly fulfil it.

The rite of baptiſm, therefore, which was inſtituted in the room of circumciſion, has the ſame intention with us that circumciſion had with the Jews. It is meant as an aſſurance, or ſeal, of God's entering into covenant with us.

The Jews uſed to accompany circumciſion with a ſort of baptiſm. It is probable our bleſſed Saviour,

viour, (who in all things, as far as he could, accommodated his inſtitution to the prevailing practice) took baptiſm, as the eaſier part of the Jewiſh ceremony, to be the ſign of the Chriſtian covenant. In the ſame manner, it is probable, he adopted bread and wine in the Lord's ſupper from the paſſover. Indeed the ſacrifice of a lamb, after the completion of the type, would have been improper.

Some of you perhaps, if you were aſked what baptiſm is? would anſwer, that it is giving a name to a child. It is no ſuch matter. Giving a name to a child, is ſo far from being the baptiſm of the child, that it is not even ſo much as the leaſt part of baptiſm. We do indeed give, what we call its Chriſtian name, to a child at baptiſm; but this does not make the giving of the name any part of the ſacrament. The baptiſm of the child had been ſtill the ſame, if no name had been given. And indeed I am apt to fear, that the giving of a name at baptiſm has had a great tendency towards bringing this holy ſacrament ſo much into abuſe. People conceive it means nothing elſe; whereas baptiſm, I have told you, is that rite by which we enter into the covenant of the Chriſtian religion, and expreſs by it our humble acceptance of the

conditions, which God is graciouſly pleaſed to offer; and on God's part, it is, in St. Paul's language, *the ſeal* of his covenant.

Now, at firſt ſight, one ſhould imagine, that children, who cannot underſtand the nature of this covenant, ſhould not enter into it; but ſhould wait till they come to man's eſtate, and can underſtand it.—And indeed this hath often been ſaid, and many good Chriſtians do not baptize their members till they are of age. You know I mean the Baptiſts. It is not our part however to judge our brethren for differing from us in this, or indeed in any other matter, where there is no abſolute and ſpecial direction given in ſcripture, which is the caſe here. Only we expect the ſame forbearance from them.

For the propriety of infant baptiſm, as we uſe it, we reaſon thus.

As this rite ſeems to have been inſtituted in the room of circumciſion among the Jews, and as circumciſion was adminiſtered to children, it ſeems proper to admit children alſo to baptiſm, and preſent them to the Lord, as our bleſſed Saviour, you know, when a child, was preſented to the Lord in the Temple.

Farther,

Farther, as a child is very capable, we hope, of receiving the great end of the covenant; namely, eternal life; we ſee not why it may not be admitted to the ceremony alſo. If it receive the greater, there ſeems to be no reaſon why it may not receive the leſs.

Then again, we may remember, that our bleſſed Saviour took children in his arms, and declared, that ſuch only as reſembled them, were fit for the kingdom of heaven. And though this is not an expreſs command for infant baptiſm, yet, perhaps, it comes as near it as any thing can do, leſs than an expreſs command.

In this matter, however, the church demands the ſecurity of ſponſors, who are intended, if the infant ſhould be left an orphan, or neglected by its parents, to ſee it properly inſtructed in the *advantages promiſed*, and the *conditions required*.

How ſhamefully this duty is neglected I need not inform you. You know, as well as I, how many come as ſureties for children, who are themſelves as ignorant of all the duties of religion, as the very children, whom they repreſent. So that, in fact, it is now neither more nor leſs, than a good inſtitution degenerated, like many others, into a mere thing of courſe. Miniſters may be

grieved at this abuſe; but they cannot help it, while their congregations will not be at the pains of receiving thoſe meaus of inſtruction, which they have in their power, and ſhew ſo little attention either to preaching or catechiſing.

As baptiſm is thus a rite enjoined to all Chriſtians, as a ſign of our *entrance* into covenant with God, ſo the Lord's ſupper is enjoined as a ſign of our *continuance* in it. It is that outward token which Chriſt hath required us to give of our continuing to be his diſciples; and of our reſolving to maintain that faith, and thoſe laws which we have received from him. Of courſe, therefore, we can only once be baptized, becauſe we can only once enter into this covenant: but the Lord's ſupper we receive frequently, to ſhew we ſteadily continue in it.

Now theſe are the great ends and uſes of baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper. They are the ſigns you ſee, of our gratefully accepting that gracious covenant which God hath been pleaſed to enter into with man, and of our continuance in it. They are pledges too, that God will perform his part of the covenant.

But

But beſides theſe gracious ends, the two ſacraments are ſo contrived, as to impreſs upon us in a *viſible form*, the two greateſt truths of our religion.

The firſt of theſe truths, and the very foundation of our religion is, that we are fallen, loſt, and ſinful creatures, and have need of a total change of nature to make ourſelves acceptable to God. Of this water is a ſign. As it waſhes away the filth of the body, it marks the intention of that religion, which waſhes away the impurities of the ſoul.

The other great truth of our religion is, that as we *are* fallen, loſt creatures, we can only be ſaved by the atoning blood of Chriſt. This great truth is ſet forth in the Lord's ſupper, which we are enjoined to receive in remembrance of what Chriſt did and ſuffered for our ſakes. As water, therefore, is an outward ſign of that purified nature, to which baptiſm was intended to lead us; ſo are bread and wine of that body which was given, and of that blood which was ſhed as an atonement for thoſe ſins, which, notwithſtanding our purified nature, will always beſet us.

Thus then you ſee, that baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper are, at the ſame time, our ſecurities for the performance of the great covenant of grace, and alſo ſet viſibly before us two of the greateſt truths of the goſpel.

A few remarks with regard to your practice, ſhall conclude what I have ſaid on this ſubject.

As to baptiſm, I doubt not, but you all bring your children regularly to be baptized; and when a child is ill, you are very ſolicitous that it may not go out of the world without baptiſm. And all this is very right. I ſhould only wiſh you to be as ſolicitous about receiving the Lord's ſupper, as you are about baptizing your children. I ſhould be glad to aſk, *why* you are ſo ſolicitous about the baptiſm of your children? I hope it is not through faſhion, and merely becauſe your neighbours do it. I hope you could anſwer, that you bring your children to be baptized, becauſe baptiſm is a holy inſtitution of religion, the viſible entrance into it, and enjoined as ſuch by our bleſſed Saviour.—But then let me aſk you, why you do not, for the ſame reaſon, as regularly attend the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper?

ſupper? For this is likewiſe a holy inſtitution of our religion, and is equally enjoined by our bleſſed Saviour. So that if you brought your children to be baptized from a real principle of conſcience, one ſhould think that principle would carry you to the Lord's ſupper alſo. There is no reaſon for one that does not urge likewiſe for the other. Nay, there is even more reaſon for your frequenting the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, than for your being ſolicitous to have your children baptized. For if the child ſhould even die without baptiſm, nobody who has worthy notions of God, can conceive, that it would ſuffer hereafter for the neglect of other people. But you who abſtain from the ſacrament, ſin with your eyes open. You will do well therefore to conſider what reaſons have weight with you for ſo wilful a neglect.—But pray obſerve, they muſt be very extraordinary reaſons indeed, which will allow you to live in the conſtant breach of a poſitive command of God *.

* See the ſubject of the Lord's ſupper, containing further obſervations, treated in the XXXI. ſermon of the ſecond volume.

SERMON XXIV.

JOHN xiii. 17.

XII. IF YE KNOW THESE THINGS, HAPPY ARE YE IF YE DO THEM.

HAVING given you, as I propoſed in the foregoing diſcourſes, the grand outlines of the Chriſtian religion, I ſhall conclude the whole by a ſummary of the particulars.

Theſe diſcourſes opened with a ſhort account of the fall of man. In him, and in the world which he inhabits, we every where ſee evident marks of imperfection, though amidſt wonderful beauty and contrivance.

The air, the water, and the land produce ſtorms and floods, and earthquakes.

Every animal ſeems created, as it were, for deſtruction. The life of one is upheld by the death of another.

The

The ſame imperfection we find in man. He is continually diſtreſſing either himſelf or others. Look where we will, we every where ſee the effects of his irregular paſſions and appetites; of his violence, or his fraud.

What could induce the great Lord of heaven and earth, to create a world abounding with all theſe circumſtances of imperfection, hath ever been one of the moſt difficult of all queſtions.—Nor could this difficulty ever have been ſolved, if the ſcriptures had not ſolved it for us. They inform us, that the world is not now in that happy ſtate in which it was at firſt created—but that man, by tranſgreſſing the law of God, brought this miſchief upon himſelf—upon his poſterity, and upon the world which he inhabits.

From this view of the imperfection of all things here, we are led to conſider God's gracious means of reſtoring man, by ſending Jeſus Chriſt into the world. This divine Saviour came to give us juſt notions of God and of religion—to give us juſt notions of ourſelves—and to ſtamp God's authority on the precepts he enjoined. But chiefly he came to die for our ſins—to obtain pardon for us—to reſtore us to God's favour, and open to our hopes everlaſting life.

This

This great end, we have every reaſon to believe, was extended to all mankind, under whatever name diſtinguiſhed, (heathen, gentile, or barbarian,) from the very inſtant of the fall. They who lived up to the lights given them, however mean thoſe lights might be, we doubt not, were all ſaved through the blood of Chriſt. The promiſe of reſtoration was immediately made to Adam; and Chriſt is called *the Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world.*

From this view of the fall of man, and of the gracious intention of God to reſtore him, we were led to examine the ſcheme of our redemption more at large.—We examined, firſt, the preparation with which God thought it neceſſary to introduce this Holy Saviour into the world. By the time the world was well-peopled after the flood, it was overwhelmed and ſunk in idolatry and wickedneſs, and could not, one ſhould ſuppoſe, at once bear ſo immediate a change as the Chriſtian religion was intended to introduce.

There ſeem to be only two ways in which this change could be made—either by preparing man gradually for it—or by giving him a new nature; which muſt have been brought about by a miracle. God, in his wiſdom, choſe the former method;

method; and it appeared, that the Jewiſh nation, and religion, were the means which God uſed to prepare the world for the reception of Chriſtianity. Abraham, the father of the Jewiſh nation, had a promiſe made him, that in his poſterity *all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed.* To his immediate deſcendants the ſame promiſe was renewed. The offering of Iſaac—the promiſed land—the bondage in Egypt—the redemption from that bondage—and a variety of circumſtances which befell the Jewiſh nation in the wilderneſs, were all repreſentations of the Meſſiah's kingdom.

Again, after the Jews were formed into a regular government, and their temple was eſtabliſhed; a new ſet of types, or repreſentations of the Meſſiah, took place. Every part of their worſhip, their various ſacrifices—the paſſover—the veil of the temple—the ſcape-goat—the high-prieſt entering the holy of holies—the cenſer of incenſe—the ſeveral purifyings of their law, and many other parts of it, were all lively repreſentations of the Meſſiah.—To theſe we may add the predictions of their prophets, many of which were ſo plain, that they almoſt ſeemed the very hiſtory of thoſe events, which we well know, happened many hundred years afterwards.

Having

Having thus ſeen in what way the Jews themſelves were prepared for the reception of the goſpel, we examined next, how their intercourſe with other nations was contrived to ſpread theſe preparatory notices throughout the world. The patriarchs led a wandering life among ſeveral nations; and, no doubt, inſtructed them, in ſome degree, in religious knowledge. — Afterwards their poſterity remained long in Egypt, where we may well ſuppoſe, the miracles wrought by Moſes had left behind very awful impreſſions of the Jewiſh religion. As the Jews became nationally eſtabliſhed, their traffic, their wars, their captivities; and, laſtly, their conqueſt by the Romans, all tended to ſpread their religious knowledge in various parts. And, in fact, through all theſe means, there was a general expectation among the civilized part of mankind, of ſome great deliverer who was to ariſe about the time, when Chriſt really appeared.

We proceeded next to conſider the miracles and prophecies, to which our bleſſed Saviour appealed for the truth of his coming from God.

But as we know the truth of theſe things *only through the ſcriptures*, it ſeemed neceſſary, before

we

we proceeded, to ſhew on what grounds we believe the truth of ſcripture.

The books of Moſes could not be forged, becauſe they contained the law by which the people were governed, which law was confirmed by a number of miracles, performed before many thouſand people. Theſe miracles were plain to all men's ſenſes, and might eaſily have been contradicted, if they had been falſe. If the Jewiſh nation had not believed the miracles, they certainly would not have received the law, which depended on the miracles. But they did receive the law; therefore they believed the miracles, and the book in which theſe miracles were contained.—As for the Jewiſh prophets, the *events fulfilled* have ſufficiently proved their authority.—We next examined on what proofs the reſt of the books of the Old Teſtament depended.

With regard to the New Teſtament, as it was written and publiſhed nearly at the time, when the events which it records were performed, it could not poſſibly be forged. If it had, it muſt have been detected. But none of its early enemies ever ſpoke againſt its truth, as they knew very well it could not be attacked on that ſide. *Their* objections were of another kind. They left it to unbe-

lievers, who lived later in the hiſtory of the world, to deny the truth of ſcripture.

From proving the truth of ſcripture, we proceeded to conſider the miracles and prophecies to which our Saviour appealed. We firſt examined the nature of a miracle. As it is a work which human power cannot perform, it follows, that whoever was enabled to perform it, proved plainly, that he acted under the authority of God, who alone was able to perform it.—It appeared alſo, that the prophecies of the Old Teſtament were fulfilled in Jeſus Chriſt, and could be fulfilled in no other perſon; and that many of his own prophecies had been fulfilled in after-ages, which brought new matter of proof to us in theſe later times.

Having thus ſeen on what ground the *divine authority* of our bleſſed Saviour reſted; we conſidered next the *nature of his religion*. We examined it as a gracious covenant between God and man, and pointed out how it chiefly differed from every other religion that had ever appeared in the world. The only foundation of hope men could have had from any other religion, was by uniformly obeying the precepts of it; becauſe no religion, except the Chriſtian, ever profeſſed the privilege of pardoning ſin.

The

The general ſcope and deſign of Chriſtianity was the next object of our inquiry. It was intended to reſtore man from the loſt condition in which the fall of his firſt parents had involved him, and to prepare him for everlaſting happineſs: the great deſign of it, therefore, was to purify his nature—to make him a new creature—and to qualify him for a future ſtate of purity and perfection.

The means by which this great end was to be attained, were *faith* and *obedience*. The goſpel contains all thoſe holy laws and inſtructions, which we muſt obſerve, in order to purify our nature. It is abſolutely neceſſary for us, therefore, to have ſuch an ardent faith in Chriſt, as will enable us for his ſake, and the ſake of his promiſes, to practiſe theſe laws. We muſt firſt believe, before we can obey.

In treating this part of the ſubject, ſome points of duty were mentioned, on which a particular ſtreſs is laid; as the forgiveneſs of our enemies—reſtitution, in caſe we have defrauded any one—and improving more and more in goodneſs. If we are not ſincere in theſe things, which are the ſtrongeſt teſts of our faith, we may be aſſured, we have no ſincerity about us.

Having

Having thus conſidered, in general, thoſe conditions of the Chriſtian covenant which *we* are to perform, we conſider next theſe conditions, which God hath been graciouſly pleaſed to promiſe on his part—the aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, pardon for our ſins, and everlaſting life.

On the other hand, to thoſe who break the conditions of this covenant;—that is, who lead wicked lives,—he hath threatened future miſery; the nature of which, as far as we have ſcripture grounds, was explained.

Having thus taken a view of the great end of this gracious covenant—its conditions, and its ſanctions, we proceeded to explain thoſe outward acts and ceremonies, which confirm it. Theſe are baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper, which imply our humble acceptance of the gracious conditions which God hath offered, and are likewiſe pledges on his part of the performance of them. They are intended alſo to remind us of the two great truths of the goſpel firſt, that we are loſt and ſinful creatures—and, ſecondly, that we can only be reſtored through the death and mediation of Chriſt. The former of theſe truths is ſet forth by water in baptiſm: the latter, by bread and wine in the Lord's ſupper.

Thus

Thus I have endeavoured, my brethren, in a courſe of ſermons, to inſtruct you in the nature of our religion; and have laid the whole before you with method and connexion, that you may have the clearer view of it.

But though I have endeavoured to ſet theſe things before you, yet my endeavours go but a very little way. They are of little conſequence. The great matter is, what you are to do for yourſelves, in order to obtain God's bleſſed aſſiſtance upon your endeavours.—I have endeavoured to ſet before you the knowledge of your duty. But knowledge, without practice, is nothing. You are not made happy by knowing theſe things. *If ye know them*, ſays the text, *happy* only *are ye if ye do them.* Let this then be the leſſon, that is to ſink deep into you—that it is *doing* theſe things, not *knowing* them, that is to make you happy.

Remember your Saviour's parable of the ſeed. It is an eaſy buſineſs for the ground to receive it. It takes it as it falls.—It is juſt as eaſy to hear the word.—But to bear fruit, is another matter.

In that parable, you read, there are various ſoils. There is firſt the hardened ſoil, which the

ſeed could not penetrate—there is, ſecondly, the ſtony ſoil—there is, thirdly, the ſoil choked with weeds—and, fourthly, there is the good ſoil; that is, in plain language, there are three parts in four of mankind, that make little uſe of the knowledge they receive. And then their knowledge only riſes in witneſs againſt them.—What avails it to know you are loſt, and fallen creatures, if you ſtill ſuffer your natural corruption to continue?—if you never ſtrive, nor pray to remove it?—What avails it to know, you can expect ſalvation only through Chriſt; if you do not by holy lives, make his death efficacious in taking away your ſins? Will the knowledge, think you, of theſe things ſave you?—Are the truths of the goſpel intended to enlighten the underſtanding, or to improve the heart? The goodneſs of the tree is known by the fruit it bears—And ſo is the goodneſs of a Chriſtian. We muſt know our duty, it is true, before we can practiſe it: but if our knowledge do not lead to practice—if it do not produce in us good lives, we are fruitleſs trees, and *only cumber the ground.* You remember what was ſaid of him, who knew his maſter's will, and did it not: his ſentence was deſervedly ſevere.

Let

Let me then conclude as I began. I can add nothing ſtronger; and let it be deeply imprinted in your minds. They are your Saviour's own words—*if ye know theſe things, happy are ye if ye do them:* and may the grace of God, through Jeſus Chriſt, impreſs them upon you!

SERMON XXV.

JOHN, vii. 46.

NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN.

THE chief prieſt and Phariſees being determined, if poſſible, to deſtroy our bleſſed Saviour; and having gotten, as they ſuppoſed, ſome handle againſt him, ſent their officers to apprehend him. The officers were ſo ſtruck with what Jeſus ſaid to them, that they returned without him. "Never "man," ſaid they, "ſpake like this man." What our Saviour ſaid to theſe officers does not appear; but we may be ſure, from his anſwering on other occaſions, it was ſomething, which they thought extremely uncommon and affecting.

As we are often apt to paſs over things ſlightly, which deſerve great attention, many of us, in the preſent

preſent caſe, may not conſider in ſo ſtrong a light as we ought, the extraordinary power with which our Saviour always *ſpoke*. In the following diſcourſe therefore, I ſhall endeavour to explain the text, by ſhewing you, *firſt*, the *great wiſdom with which he* oppoſed his adverſaries—*ſecondly*, the *divine precepts he gave his diſciples*—and, *thirdly*, the *grand ſcheme of redemption which he opened*; in all which *he ſpake as never man ſpake*.

We firſt admire *the great wiſdom with which he oppoſed his adverſaries*. Thus when they aſked him, whether it were lawful to give tribute to Cæſar? they wanted only a handle againſt him.—If he had ſaid it was lawful, he would have offended the Jews, who thought themſelves naturally free from all tribute. If he had ſaid, it was not lawful, he would have offended the Romans, who had impoſed the tribute. An ordinary man might have held his peace; or have anſwered, he was no judge of the caſe: the wiſdom of Jeſus meant to confound theſe malicious enquirers. He aſked for a piece of money with which the tribute was paid. Whoſe image, ſaid he, does this coin bear? On their anſwering Cæſar's, he bade them give it

then to Cæſar, if it was Cæſar's. But, as his manner was, always to introduce ſome moral inſtruction, he bade them remember, they had a heavenly power to ſerve, ſtill ſuperior to Cæſar. His enemies, aſtoniſhed at his wiſdom, left him in confuſion.

The ſame ſnare was laid for him, when the woman taken in adultery was brought before him. If he had ſaid, they ought not to put her to death, he oppoſed the law of Moſes; and if he had adviſed the contrary, he laid himſelf open to the Romans, who forbade the Jews the power of life and death*. Here again he might have avoided the difficulty by ſilence; but he choſe rather to confound his wicked adverſaries, by ſetting their conſciences and their practice at variance. Let him, ſaid he, among you, who hath never been guilty of this crime himſelf †, throw the firſt ſtone. This rouſed the conſcience of each, eſpecially as they were probably conſcious of each other's guilt, and they retired in confuſion. He then told the woman, it

* See John, xviii. 31.

† This appears rather to be the meaning of our Saviour's expreſſion, than our tranſlation of it; for ſin of *ſome kind* they had all undoubtedly committed.

was

was not his part to paſs any *judicial ſentence* upon her; but only exhorted her to ſin no more.

Among other inſtances of the wiſdom with which he reproved his adverſaries, we may remark ſome of his parables. Such was that of the man, who had two ſons, whom he ordered to work in his vineyard. The elder pretended to go, but afterwards refuſed. The younger at firſt refuſed, but afterwards went. In the elder was held out the perverſeneſs of the Jews in rejecting the goſpel: in the younger, the penitence of the Gentiles, who ſhould now be received. But though the parable was very ſevere, the chief prieſts could not take hold of Jeſus, becauſe the wiſdom, as well as the ſeverity of it, lay in their own application.

Of the ſame kind was the parable of the gueſts invited to the marriage. As they who had been invited would not come, the maſter of the feaſt ſought for ſuch as could be found. The chief prieſts had ſenſe enough to underſtand the feaſt meant the goſpel—the gueſts who refuſed to come, the Jews; and thoſe invited from abroad, the Gentiles. If Jeſus had ſaid all this plainly, his enemies would ſoon have raiſed an acculation

againſt him: but as he told them only a fable, the application was their own.

Of the ſame kind alſo was the parable of the houſeholder, who let out his vineyard to husbandmen. On their uſing his ſervants ill whom he had ſent to gather the fruits of it, he at length ſent his ſon, but him they put to death.—In the preceding parable, Jeſus had ſhewn the chief prieſts what they *had done*; in this he ſhewed them what they *intended to do*. But ſtill each parable was wrapped up in ſo much prudent caution, that his enemies were their own accuſers.

Having given you *a few* inſtances of our bleſſed Saviour's wiſdom in reproving his adverſaries, I ſhall now ſhew you, that in giving inſtruction alſo, *no man ſpake like this man*. In the firſt place, he laid a ſtreſs on many virtues, which other lawgivers did not value—on humility, for inſtance, gentleneſs, meekneſs of ſpirit, the forgiveneſs of enemies, contempt of the world, and univerſal charity. It was his deſign to draw men *from* this world, to which they are always too much attached. Other lawgivers wiſh to fit men *for* it, and therefore

fore give them worldly inſtructions. But as our Saviour intended to qualify men for heaven, he taught them ſuch virtues as were ſuited to that bleſſed ſtate. No man ever ſpake in that way but himſelf.

Again, our bleſſed Saviour, (as his forerunner John had foretold,) *laid the axe to the root of the tree.* Other inſtructors enjoined *virtuous actions.* Jeſus went farther, and laid a reſtraint on our *thoughts*, well knowing that if the heart were pure, the actions would be pure of courſe; and if impure, nothing good could ſpring from it.

Another great principle which he held out, and which was given by no other lawgiver, was to do every thing to pleaſe God. This was a directing principle on all occaſions, for every man muſt know in his heart, whether he wiſhed to pleaſe God.

Again, our Saviour did not draw his inſtructions into length, by ſhewing the ground and reaſon of each precept: he gave them, as the Jews obſerved, *with authority, and not as the ſcribes.* His inſtructions frequently were couched in ſhort ſentences; ſuch as, *Love your neighbour as yourſelf. Do to others as you would have them do to you. Let not your right hand know what your left hand*

hand doth. All theſe, which are in fact the law reduced to a portable ſize, are ſo plain and eaſy—ſo readily remembered, and ſo obvious on all occaſions, that it muſt be a man's own fault, if he be ignorant of his duty. His duty is thus brought home to his feelings.

We remarked ſome of our Saviour's parables as great inſtances of that wiſdom, with which he avoided, or reproved his enemies: we may remark others as very beautiful pieces of wiſdom and inſtruction, ſuch indeed as are no where met with, but in the inſtructions of him, *who ſpake as never man ſpake.* In the prodigal ſon, with what wonderful tenderneſs is repreſented the happy ſtate of a repenting ſinner?—In the rich man, who laid up his goods for many years, how ſtriking is the folly of truſting to earthly poſſeſſions?—In the ſelf-exalted Phariſee, and the humble publican, how ſtrongly is ſpiritual pride reproved, and humility inculcated?—How affectingly are we taught to love our enemies, by the parable of the good Samaritan? and how awfully are we ſhewn, in the ſtory of Lazarus and the rich man, the end to which our riches bring us, if we employ them only in gratifying ourſelves?—In the parable of the ſeed ſown on various ſoils, how aptly are we

ſhewn the neceſſity of cultivating our minds with the heavenly inſtruction of the goſpel.—The parable of the talents delivered to different ſervants, ſhews us that God hath appointed different ſtations among mankind; and that every man ſhould act faithfully according to his ſtation; while the parable of the ten virgins, who waited for the bridegroom, and of whom five were ſhut out, reminds us of that conſtant vigilance, which we all ought to uſe in theſe ſeveral ſtations. But it would exceed the bounds of a diſcourſe of this kind, to quote all our Saviour's uncommonly inſtructive leſſons. I haſten therefore to ſhew, as I propoſed, *thirdly*, in what way, above all others, he *ſpake like no other man*. I mean, in his opening *the grand ſcheme of the redemption of mankind*.

From the hiſtory of Moſes, it was well known, that our firſt parents had fallen from their original purity. But people knew not in thoſe early times the extent of the miſchief; nor in what way reſtoration was provided; except from the notices of certain prophecies, which were not clearly underſtood, till they were fulfilled; and from what they could gather of the nature of atonement from the rite of ſacrifice. When he came, who

who *ſpake as never man ſpake*, he opened to mankind every thing that was neceſſary to be known on this ſubject. He ſhewed us the nature of a future world. He informed us alſo of the nature of that world, which we now inhabit. He ſhewed us, that one world was meant only to lead us to the other—and that in a future ſtate, rewards and puniſhments ſhould be finally adjuſted, ſo as to rectify every appearance of inequality which might ſtrike us here. He diſcovered to us the nature of God—informed us that his Providence extended to the ſmalleſt parts of his creation—that he was merciful, and kind to man; but, at the ſame time, juſt and righteous. He ſhewed us how we were to pleaſe this holy God.—The ſacrifices of the heathen, and ceremonies of the Jews, which were meant only as types, were not the kind of devotion in which he took moſt delight.—A ſincere and humble heart—a pious life—and holy prayers, were the moſt acceptable offerings that could be made to him.—The ſame gracious friend to mankind promiſed alſo, that the endeavours of his faithful ſervants ſhould be aſſiſted by the holy ſpirit of God. He father explained the kind intention of his coming into the world, not only to reſtore us by his divine precepts, to that ſtate of purity, as far as human frailty would admit,

admit, which we had loſt; but chiefly to lay down his life to procure pardon for our ſins, and to obtain that happineſs for us, which we had forfeited by the fall of our firſt parents. Even our bodies, he informs us, ſhould not for ever mingle with the duſt, but ſhould riſe again from the grave—be united to our ſouls—and take part with them in the rewards and puniſhments of a future life.—And that we might not doubt the truth of all this, he confirmed it, by riſing himſelf from the grave, of which he hath left us the ſoundeſt evidence in the truth of ſcripture.

Now all this information was perfectly new to the world. Conjectures men might have, and certainly had, on many of theſe ſubjects: but their beſt philoſophers ran wild in all their opinions. It could not but give great comfort, therefore, to all ſerious people, to ſee light thrown, by degrees, on all theſe intereſting queſtions—to find their conjectures cleared of all their abſurdities—and formed into ſacred truths by him, who proved his divine commiſſion before their *eyes* by ſuch mighty works as never man wrought; and to their *ears*, by ſpeaking as never man before him ſpoke.

I ſhall

I ſhall detain you farther only by two or three obſervations.

If our bleſſed Saviour *ſpake as never man ſpake*, it is ſo far an argument, that he was *more than man:* and we add this to our other arguments to prove his divinity. We do not reſt our conviction on what the officers reported; but we have proved, from various inſtances, that what they reported was the truth.

Secondly, if our Saviour ſpake as *never man ſpake*, we may juſtly wonder, that no more attention is *now* paid to what he ſaid. When our Lord lived on earth, he was the admiration of all men. People crouded from all parts to hear him. They were aſtoniſhed both at what he ſpoke, and at the authority with which he ſpoke.—Whence is it then that, ſince, in his own time, he was ſo much admired both by friends and enemies, we ſhould now read the ſcriptures, when we do read them, with ſo much coldneſs? His divine ſayings are the ſame now they ever were. We read them juſt as he ſpoke them. His wiſdom is the ſame. He reproves his enemies with the ſame admirable prudence. His heavenly inſtructions are the ſame, and his infinite kindneſs

kindneſs in laying down his life for mankind. Why are we then leſs ſtruck with theſe things than they were, who lived in our Saviour's time?

When we read the ſcriptures therefore, let us endeavour to be more attentive. Let us place ourſelves in the circumſtances of thoſe, to whom he ſpoke. Let us bring before our eyes, as it were, the bleſſed Jeſus inſtructing us, as he did thoſe who crouded round him. His inſtructions are, in fact, as much directed to us, as to the Jews. The precepts he gave them, are the precepts he gives us. His inſtructive parables apply to both. Our minds, like theirs, are the various ſoils in which the ſeed is ſown. The repenting prodigal is not more held up to them, than to us. The rich man who *lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment*, is a dreadful warning to us all, who ſpend the bounty of heaven in ſelf-indulgence: while the good Samaritan ſets the Chriſtian, as well as the Jew, a noble example of charity; and the ten talents inſtruct both equally how we ought to proportion our good offices to our abilities.—Let us than thank God for all this holy inſtruction. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*; and liſten, with a full purpoſe of obedience to that voice, *which ſpake as never man ſpake.*

THE END OF THE SERMONS.

HINTS

FOR

SERMONS.

I.

ACTS, ii. 47.

AND THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH DAILY SUCH AS SHOULD BE SAVED.

THIS text is often brought as a proof of predeſtination. But if the context be examined, it will appear, that ſuch as *ſhould be ſaved*, were not to be ſaved by the abſolute decree of God, but by *continuing ſtedfaſt in the apoſtle's doctrine.*

The doctrines of predeſtination—election—and reprobation, which are all nearly connected, receive their chief force from the *ſuppoſition, that the fore-knowledge of God cannot be reconciled with the freedom of man's will.* That this is an awful, deep, and to us an incomprehenſible ſubject, may well be allowed. But are we not told, in various parts of ſcripture, of the *deep things of God?* Are

we not told, that things which are *impoſſible with man, are poſſible with God?* Are we not forbidden to be *wiſe above what is written?*

The predeſtinarian, in ſupport of his opinion, quotes a number of texts, which ſeem to ſerve his purpoſe.—All of them, however, either by the context, or ſome other mode of interpretation, admit of eaſy anſwers. One of the ſtrongeſt is the apoſtle's celebrated alluſion to the *potter and his clay**. This paſſage is taken from the eighteenth chapter of Jeremiah. By the prophetic ſign of the potter and his clay, (according to the common mode of eaſtern inſtruction,) the prophet inſtructs the Jews, that God exerciſed the ſame power in receiving *one nation*, and rejecting *another*, as the potter does over his clay. And it is very remarkable, that the tranſlators of our bible, who were not thought to be very averſe to theſe doctrines, tell us in the contents of this chapter, *that under the type of a potter is ſhewn God's abſolute power in diſpoſing of nations.* Now, it is evident, that the apoſtle makes exactly this uſe of the alluſion. He has not the leaſt reference to *individuals*, nor to a *future ſtate:* but merely threatens the Jews with the completion of thoſe prophecies which hung over them—the

* Rom. ix. 21.

rejection

rejection of their nation, and the acceptance of the Gentiles.

But the ſtrongeſt appeal againſt this doctrine, is to the *nature* of the *goſpel*, and to the whole *tenor* of *ſcripture*. What can be more abſurd, than to ſuppoſe God offers ſalvation to man in the *goſpel*, which can be of no ſervice to him?—What can be more abſurd, than for the *ſcripture* to exhort—to threaten—to encourage—and to promiſe—unleſs theſe modes of application mean to treat men like creatures, who have it in their power either to obey or tranſgreſs? Even on a ſuppoſition, that certain paſſages on this ſubject are *not* eaſily explained, whether is it more natural to conclude, that the *whole ſcripture* is founded on abſurdity, or that a *few texts* are not clearly underſtood?

II.

ACTS, xxiv. 16.

HEREIN DO I EEXRCISE MYSELF TO HAVE A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE TOWARDS GOD, AND TOWARDS MAN.

THOUGH every one who reads the ſcriptures, muſt confeſs, that our own righteouſneſs cannot ſave us—that, imperfect as it is, and mixed with tranſgreſſion, it can at beſt only qualify us for obtaining the effects of Chriſt's atonement; yet, on the other hand, it ſeems agreeable to the whole tenor of ſcripture, that the preacher ſhould lay a ſtreſs on good works. From *innumerable paſſages* it might be ſhewn, how much this point is laboured; but I ſhall at preſent only deduce an argument to this purpoſe, from the paſſage before us.

A *good*

A *good conſcience* can mean nothing, if it do not mean that pleaſure which we feel from our own endeavours to live uprightly, and pleaſe God—or, in other words, that complacence which we feel in our own good works. I do not mean, in the *whole* of our moral conduct, for, after all, we, are *unprofitable ſervants*, and have much to deplore; but in certain actions, wrought, as we conceive they are, on good motives.

As, therefore, we are encouraged by example and precept, to endeavour to obtain the happy *feelings* of a good conſcience, we muſt ſuppoſe, that good works, which are the foundation of theſe *feelings*, muſt have *ſome kind of merit* in the ſight of God. I am cautious in uſing the word *merit*. But I mean it in a very reſtrained ſenſe. We cannot ſurely be exhorted in ſcripture to *feel a ſatisfaction* in any thing which is not pleaſing to our Almighty Father.—If a *conſcience void of offence towards God and man*; that is, if *good works* were of *no avail*, why ſhould the apoſtle *exerciſe himſelf in them?* Faith was all he needed to have inſiſted on.—But in ſhort, the ſcripture ſuppoſes both faith and good works ſo neceſſary, as to be equally inſiſted on. *Faith* as the *mean—good works* as the *end*.

If it be ſaid, the apoſtle rejoiced in a good conſcience, only as it was *a teſt of faith*, it is not eaſy to ſay, why he ſhould leave the *cauſe* out of the queſtion, and ſpeak only of the *effect*. It would have been a more natural mode of expreſſion, to ſay, herein do I exerciſe myſelf, to have always a ſound faith.

IV.

I PET. V. viii.

BE SOBER, BE VIGILANT; BECAUSE YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL, AS A ROARING LION, WALKETH ABOUT, SEEKING WHOM HE MAY DEVOUR.

HERE are two *rules* given us, enforced by a *reaſon.*

We muſt firſt be *ſober.* This word, in the original, relates chiefly to temperance in drinking *; but it may eaſily be extended, and was probably meant to be extended, to all things in which temperance is concerned. This gives it a great range among Chriſtian virtues.

We muſt next be *vigilant.* The uſefulneſs of vigilance ariſes from the proneneſs of human na-

* See Parkhurſt's Lexicon.

ture to negligence. Temperance, which acts as a reſtraint on all our paſſions and appetites, is very apt to relax. Such deſultory temperance forms no habit. It is *the habit of temperance*, which religion requires; and which it is the office of *vigilance* to produce.

Laſtly, to awaken us to this vigilance, theſe two *rules* are enforced by a *reaſon*. *Our adverſary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour.*

Whether the devil, as a tempter, has power over mankind, at this time, is a queſtion, which hath often been decided with more boldneſs than argument. It is certain the ſcriptures ſeem to favour the opinion of ſuch exiſtence; and it is as certain, that we know nothing of the nature of ſpirit, except from ſcripture. Good men alſo often experience ſuch ſubtile temptations, as they cannot account for on any principle, except that of a ſeducing agent.—But whether we take the lion of the text for ſome wicked agent, or for temptation in general, ſtill it forms an argument very concluſive. We are always in the midſt of temptations, and cannot be too much on our guard againſt them.

V.

JOHN, iii. 3.

EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

WE are here inſtructed to prepare ourſelves for the *kingdom of heaven*, in oppoſition to that preparation, which the magiſtrate thinks ſufficient for the *kingdoms of this world*.

The good of ſociety alone is his object. Keep your deſires, he cries, within ſuch bounds as not to injure your fellow citizens, and I am ſatisfied.

But religion goes deeper. We are members, it informs us, of a higher kingdom, into which we muſt be *born*, as it were *anew*. We muſt not be ſatisfied with reſtraining the *outward act*; we muſt purify the *inward affection*.

Thus

Thus then we are, in fact, members of two different ſocieties, for which two different modes of preparation are required.—Which of theſe modes of preparation is ſuperior, may be ſeen, by conſidering the firſt as qualifying us only for *one* ſociety—the other for *both*. The ſoldier may fight for glory, or plunder—and the ſtateſman may court popularity. Each may benefit his ſociety; yet as neither has yet made any ground in the doctrine, which enjoins him *to be born again*; ſo neither, of courſe, is qualified for the *kingdom of heaven*.—Whereas, he who is *born again*—whoſe actions are governed by the laws of the *kingdom of heaven*, not only qualifies himſelf for that kingdom, but promotes more uniformly the good alſo of that inferior ſociety, of which he is a member. Thus, for inſtance, the ſoldier who fights for glory or reward, if he have reaſon to believe he ſhall attain neither, withdraws from the ſervice as ſoon as he can: he has no other motive to puſh him on: while the ſoldier who acts under a ſenſe of religion, has nothing to do with the motives of glory and reward. He acts under higher influence, and obeys the call of his country, as long as his ſervices are required.

Such

Such a character, we are told, is ideal. It does not exiſt. We all mix glory, or reward, or other worldly motive with our purſuits.

In a degree, no doubt, we do: but perhaps not in ſo full a degree as the objector may ſuppoſe. However, on a ſuppoſition the *objection* were true, it is ſtill no argument againſt the *doctrine*. We are not contending how *many*, or how *few* obſerve the doctrine; but only aſſert ſimply, that if the doctrine were obſerved, the effect would be, as it is here repreſented.

This again the objector denies. The maxims of the goſpel, he obſerves, are ſo oppoſite to the maxims of the world, that they are unfit to qualify men as ſoldiers, ſtateſmen, or members of a community in any ſhape; and that no man, who ſtrictly adheres to them, can exert himſelf properly in any civil department.

This is a bold aſſertion. But in order to ſettle it, the doctrines of Chriſtianity muſt be well examined—they muſt be compared with the intereſts of mankind—and the impoſſibility of a union muſt be ſhewn from examples, which have failed, not through want of abilities, (for religion cannot ſecure abilities,) but through mere adherence to religious principles.—We aſſert, therefore, that on a ſuppo-

a ſuppoſition two men have *equal abilities*, he who has *more religion*, will ſerve his country better in every ſtation. It ſeems a natural concluſion, for he will be leſs influenced by thoſe private impulſes, which generally draw men from a public ſenſe *.

* I cannot forbear mentioning here two or three ſoldiers, who were amongſt the moſt eminent of their profeſſion, and yet were men of great piety. The late Prince Eugene was one. He was eſteemed the firſt captain of his age. The battle of Peterwaradin was one of the boldeſt actions, and compleateſt victories on record. Immerſed as he had been from his earlieſt youth, with little intermiſſion, in the horrors of war, he never loſt ſight of religion. The following prayer was found among his papers:

PRINCE EUGENE's PRAYER.

I *Believe* in thee, O my God! Do thou ſtrengthen my *faith*: I *hope* in thee, confirm my *hopes*; I *love* the, inflame my *love* more and more; I *repent* of all my ſins, but do thou increaſe my *repentance*. As my firſt *beginning*, I worſhip thee; as my laſt *end*, I long for thee; as my eternal *benefactor*, I praiſe thee, and as my ſupreme *protector*, I pray unto thee, that it may pleaſe thee, O Lord, to guide and lead me by thy *providence*, to keep me in obedience by thy *juſtice*, to comfort me by thy *mercy*, and protect me by thy almighty power. I ſubmit to thee all my thoughts, words, and actions, as well as my afflictions, pains, and ſufferings; and I deſire to have *thee* always in my mind, to do all my works in thy name, and for thy ſake to bear all adverſity with patience. I will what thou wilt, O God, becauſe it is agreeable to *thee*. Oh, give me *grace*, that I may be attentive in my prayer, temperate in my diet, vigilant in my conduct, and unmove-

able

ſole in all good purpoſes. Grant, moſt merciful Lord, that I may be true and faithful to thoſe who have entruſted me with their ſecrets; that I may be courteous and kind towards all men; and that both in my words and actions, I may ſhew unto them a good example. Diſpoſe my heart to admire and praiſe thy goodneſs, to hate all error and evil works, to love my neighbour, and to deſpiſe the world. Aſſiſt me, good Lord, in ſubduing luſt by mortification, covetouſneſs by liberality, anger by mildneſs, and lukewarmneſs by zeal and fervency. Enable me to conduct myſelf with prudence in all tranſactions, and to ſhew courage in danger, patience in adverſity, and in proſperity an humble mind. Let thy grace illuminate my underſtanding, direct my will, ſanctify my body, and bleſs my ſoul. Make me diligent in curbing all irregular affections, zealous in imploring thy grace, careful in keeping thy commandments, and conſtant in working out my ſalvation. Finally, O God, make me ſenſible how little is the world, how great thy heavens, how ſhort time, and how long a bleſſed eternity. Oh that I may well prepare myſelf for death! that I may dread thy judgments; that I may avoid the torments of hell, and obtain of thee, O God, eternal life, through the merits of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen."

The life of the Baron de la Motte Fouque, was publiſhed at Berlin by Monſ. G. A. Ruttuer. He was general of the Pruſſian infantry: and of his profeſſional merit, no other teſtimony is neceſſary, than that he enjoyed, through life, the particular eſteem and friendſhip of Frederick II. who held a correſpondence with him during many years.

At the ſame time, he was remarkable for his attachment to religion, which he ſometimes indeed carried to a degree of enthuſiaſm. The particulars of his death, as recorded by his biographer, are ſingular; and though ſomewhat

thuſiaſtic, at leaſt marked ſtrongly his ſenſe of religion.—As he found his end perceptibly drawing nearer, he took an opportunity, one Sunday morning, after attending divine ſervice at the French church at Brandenburgh, where he reſided, to fix on a ſpot for his grave. He next ordered his coffin to be made; and when he heard it was brought into a chamber adjoining to that in which he ſlept, he entered the room with two or three of his ſervants, and ſeating himſelf in it, he uncovered his white hairs, and ordered one of his ſervants to ſing a favourite German hymn, which is an addreſs to the grave. When this ceremony was finiſhed, he ſettled his affairs.—A little before his death, he ſent for a miniſter, and deſired his whole family, and others of his friends, to join with him in receiving the holy ſacrament. He then ſolemnly bleſſed his children, and took leave of all his friends. On the ſecond of May 1774, as his ſervant had continued ſome time reading to him, in a book of devotion, his ſon, the preſent Baron, aſked him, if he might not relieve the ſervant? The general imperceptibly dying made a faint endeavour to graſp his ſon's hand, and expired in the action.

To theſe religious ſoldiers might be ſubjoined the late Colonel Gardiner. His early life had been ſpent freely. He was converted, it is ſaid, by receiving a muſket ball through his mouth and cheek, as he was ſwearing an oath. From that time he became as eminently religious, as he had always been exemplary in his profeſſion. At the battle of Preſton-pans he led his regiment againſt the Highlanders; and when his dragoons, involved in the general panic of that day, fled from the field, he continued at his poſt, calling out to them, and endeavouring to rally the few

that

that remained, till he was ſurrounded, and cut in pieces by the enemy. The life of this eminent ſoldier was written by his pious friend, Dr. Doddridge.

THE SUM OF RELIGION.

Written by Sir MATTHEW HALE, *Lord Chief Juſtice of England.*

He that fears the Lord of heaven and earth walks humbly before him, thankfully lays hold of the meſſage of redemption by Jeſus Chriſt, and ſtrives to expreſs his thankfulneſs by the ſincerity of his obedience. He is ſorry with all his ſoul when he comes ſhort of his duty; he walk watchfully in the denial of himſelf, and holds no confederacy with any luſt or known ſin. If he fail in the leaſt meaſure, he is reſtleſs till he has made his peace by true repentance. He is true to his promiſe, juſt in his dealings, charitable to the poor, ſincere in his devotion. He would not deliberately diſhonour God, although with the greateſt ſecurity of impunity. He hath his hopes and his converſation in heaven; he dares not do any thing unjuſtly, although never ſo much to his advantage; and all this becauſe he ſees him that is inviſible, and fears him becauſe he loves him; fears him as well for his goodneſs as his greatneſs. Such a man, whether he be an *Epiſcoparian*, or *Preſbyterian*, or *Independant*, or *Anabaptiſt*; whether he wear a *Surplice*, or wears none; whether he hears *Organs*, or hears none; whether he kneels at the *Communion*, or for *Conſcience* ſake ſtands or ſits, he hath the life of religion in him, and that life acts in him, and will conform his ſoul to the image of his Saviour, and go along with him to eternity, notwithſtanding his practice or non-practice of things indifferent.

On the other ſide, if a man fear not the eternal God, he does commit ſin with preſumption, he can drink to exceſs, lie, ſwear vainly and falſely, live looſely, break his promiſes. Such a man, although he cry down *Biſhops*, or cry down *Preſbytery*; although he be rebaptized every day, or diſclaim againſt it as *Hereſy*; although he faſt all the lent, or feaſt out of pretence of avoiding ſuperſtition, yet notwithſtanding theſe, and a thouſand more external conformities, or zealous oppoſition of them, he wants the life of religion.

VI.

1 JOHN, ii. 15.

LOVE NOT THE WORLD, NEITHER THE THINGS THAT ARE IN THE WORLD. IF ANY MAN LOVE THE WORLD, THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IS NOT IN HIM.

IT is no eaſy matter to aſcertain, at leaſt in practice, the relative degrees of love to God—our neighbour—ourſelves—and the world. Each of them is entitled to our love in a certain degree. The great point is, to fix that degree. At preſent, however, we are led by the text only to conſider the love of God and the world.

To theſe two great ſources, the happineſs of every man may be referred. They form the whole conteſt between ſpiritual and temporal—between our ſouls and our bodies—between life and eternity. It is

our buſineſs, therefore, to enquire which produces the greateſt ſum of happineſs. And one ſhould think, we had data ſufficient to form an eaſy compariſon.—But, alas! even the religious man will find it a difficult matter to keep his affections right. The world will impoſe upon him in a thouſand ſhapes, and court him under various *forms of allowable amuſement, and innocent pleaſure.* Let him look well therefore into the deceit, and not contribute to deceive himſelf. Let him ſuffer no ſuſpected pleaſures and amuſements to paſs without giving a fair account of their end—their effect upon his mind—their connected conſequences—and their agreement with the word of God. Still, as we live in the world, to which ſo great a part of our compoſition is adapted, and with which we have ſo much neceſſary intercourſe, we cannot avoid ſtraying ſometimes into its crooked paths. *God be merciful to me a ſinner!* is a prayer which ſuits every man's condition; and if we add our ſteady endeavours to get right, no doubt God will be merciful to us; he will hear our prayer, and aſſiſt us by his holy ſpirit.

VII.

1 JOHN, v. 19.

THE WHOLE WORLD LYETH IN WICKEDNESS.

THE wickedneſs of the world, taken for its inhabitants, is a poſition which few, I ſuppoſe, are inclined to contradict. Whether we examine mankind in a ſavage *, or in a civilized ſtate—in ſociety, or as individuals, ſtill we ſee ſo much corruption of every kind, both public and private, that we muſt acknowledge there is not much exaggeration in what the apoſtle advances, that *the whole world lyeth in wickedneſs.*

* In general, the ſavage nations that have been diſcovered, are ferocious, cruel, and treacherous, or weak, enervated, and effeminate. The inhabitants of the Pelew iſlands are the only virtuous people we have ever heard of in a ſtate of nature. We have every reaſon however to believe, that the accounts we have of them are over-charged.

I mean not however to enter into the diſcuſſion of a point ſo little contradicted: the uſe I would make of it, is to conſider it as an argument that might well be dwelt on, in proof of the Chriſtian religion.

In the firſt place it ſeems highly neceſſary, that man ſhould have ſomething better than his own reaſon, to teach him how to pleaſe and worſhip God. This ſeemed neceſſary even to the heathen philoſophers, among whom Plato, in particular, ſpeaks more than once of the neceſſity of a divine inſtructor.

If therefore we believe, that a divine inſtructor is *neceſſary*, if even the heathen themſelves thought ſo; there can be no *difficulty in our believing* that God *would do* what appears to us ſo *neceſſary*.

Secondly, it ſeems neceſſary, that man in ſo corrupt a ſtate, ſhould have ſome other merits beſides his own — ſome interceſſor beſides himſelf to plead his pardon. It is the *natural idea of man*, that when he offends, he ſhould endeavour to get ſome powerful interceſſor to ſtand between him and the juſt indignation of the perſon he hath offended. Hence ſacrifices and other expiatory rites found ſuch ready reception in the heathen world.

world.—As this idea likewiſe is *natural*, there ſeems to be no difficulty in *cloſing with it*; and, of courſe, no difficulty in cloſing with Chriſtianity.

In fact, Chriſtianity may be conſidered as a grand act of that continual reſtoration, which we ſee conſtantly before our eyes in the natural world. The ſame gracious providence which is continually reſtoring to nature its decaying powers, may be ſuppoſed likewiſe to provide for, and reſtore the moral decays of man.

The great objections to this argument are, firſt, the late appearance of Chriſtianity—ſecondly, its want of univerſality—and, thirdly, its want of full effect.——N. B. Theſe objections are very capable of being refuted, and might be conſidered, if the diſcourſe were drawn into length.

VIII.

JAMES, ii. 18.

A MAN MAY SAY, THOU HAST FAITH, AND I HAVE WORKS. SHEW ME THY FAITH WITHOUT THY WORKS, AND I WILL SHEW THEE MY FAITH BY MY WORKS.

THIS whole chapter of the apoſtle James is ſo good a comment upon thoſe parts of St. Paul's epiſtles, which the ſolfidian has drawn to his own purpoſe, that one ſhould think it might prevent any miſconſtruction of them. Indeed ſome of the early reformers, who favoured the ſolfidian ſcheme, wiſhed to exclude this epiſtle from the canon of ſcripture. It ſtill however maintains its ground. The text contains a ſort of challenge to thoſe who hold *faith* independent of *works*. *Shew me thy faith*

faith without thy works; and I will ſhew thee my faith by my works.

In the following diſcourſe, I ſhall conſider the two opinions which the apoſtle characterizes—*faith without works*, and *faith by works*; and ſhall endeavour to ſhew which has the more charitable tendency.

The ſolfidian maintains, that faith is the *end*, or *ſum* of religion—that it is this which juſtifies—and that as to *works*, they ſhould be conſidered merely as the *teſt* of faith.

The oppoſer theſe doctrines allows, that faith is the true ſource of good works; but he contends, that it is a *mean*, not an *end*. Indeed he aſſerts, that *neither faith*, nor *good works*, can be ſaid to *juſtify* any man, but the *merits of Chriſt* alone; for which good works, wrought *through the agency of faith*, are the ſpecial qualification.

Let us now from this ſtate of the two opinions, which, I apprehend, is a fair one, ſee what effect they *naturally ſeem* to have on the mind.

The ſolfidian truſts in faith ſolely for his juſtification, and conceives it therefore to be the ſum of Chriſtianity. Of courſe he allows no perſon, who has not *his idea* of faith, to be a good Chriſtian; and if he ſpeak out, he will ſay, (indeed I have heard

heard him ſay it,) that he does not believe ſuch a perſon to be in a ſtate of ſalvation.

On the other hand, he who conſiders faith not as an *end*, but as the *mean* of a good life, conſiders that perſon only as a bad Chriſtian, whoſe life is wicked. He may believe the ſolfidian, and many others, to be in error; yet ſtill he conſiders them as good Chriſtians, if their lives be without reproach.

We are far however from ſuppoſing, there are not many enlarged minds, which may hold the doctrine of faith, without any of theſe prejudices about them. All we mean is, that among the low and bigotted people of this perſuaſion, there is often found a want of charity.

IX.

1 COR. i. 21.

FOR AFTER THAT—THE WORLD BY WISDOM KNEW NOT GOD, IT PLEASED GOD BY THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING, (that is, *by the ſimplicity of the goſpel,*) TO SAVE THEM THAT BELIEVE.

WE have here a contraſt between the heathen world, depending on its own wiſdom—and the Chriſtian world depending on the ſimple truths of the goſpel.

The philoſophy of the heathen was carried to a great height. Their wiſe man, in lofty language, allowed himſelf inferior only to the gods. And yet, with all this pride and ſelf-conſequence, he was in fact ignorant of all thoſe truths which *moſt* concerned him. He knew little of the nature of God—little of his own nature here—and ſtill leſs

of

of his future ſtate hereafter. In the mean time the goſpel gives him ſufficient information on all theſe ſubjects.

From this contraſt may be known, in what the ſimplicity of the goſpel conſiſts; and how much better it is adapted to inculcate our duty to God and man, than any ſyſtem of human ethics. Happineſs is the great end we all aim at: and when the truths of the goſpel find a ſoil prepared for them, they produce, it may be ſhewn, every happineſs that can be enjoyed in this world, and hoped for in the next. Whereas, the virtues of *the world* are often among the greateſt ſources of miſery; and, at beſt, cannot carry us beyond the world.

X.

ROM. xii. 4.

FOR AS WE HAVE MANY MEMBERS IN ONE BODY, AND ALL MEMBERS HAVE NOT THE SAME OFFICE; SO WE BEING MANY, ARE ONE BODY IN CHRIST, AND EVERY ONE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER.

THE apoſtle here compares a *ſtate of ſociety* to a *human body*. The general health of both conſiſts in the health of their reſpective members: If each member perform its functions properly, the whole is ſound.

If we try this nation by the apoſtle's criterion, I fear we ſhall not find it in perfect health.

The firſt perſon we call upon is the gentleman of independent fortune. No man's ſtation in the community is more honourable and uſeful:—you

have it in your power, in a great degree, to *ſet the faſhion*, if I may ſo ſpeak, of religion in your neighbourhood. Your tenants—your labourers—and ſervants—all look up to you. From *your* ſtation therefore we expect not only a decorum of manners—but we expect to ſee the poor relieved—the injured redreſſed—order and regularity eſtabliſhed—and a true ſenſe of religion encouraged.

Inſtead of this, what is your common behaviour? How often do you fleece the country to carry a purſe to the capital? There you conſume it in various modes of extravagance. If you ſerve your country in parliament, you have your *party*, not your *opinion*. The whole is a *job*: from hence you expect a return for the money ſpent on your election.

When the heats of ſummer drive you for a few months into the country, it is happy, if you do not ſpread among your neighbours the diſſipation and profligacy of the town.

Let us next call the merchant, together with the man of trade and buſineſs. You may be very uſeful members of the community: you are profitably employing numbers in procuring an honeſt liveli-

hood:

hood: you are benefiting your country, by introducing foreign commodities, and diſpoſing of your own. You connect mankind in a bond of amity and civilization. And though you may not act immediately under theſe motives, yet while you are carrying on an honeſt trade within proper bounds, you are worthy inſtruments, for theſe purpoſes, in the hands of God.

But now what is the fact? Do you at all conſider yourſelves as performing this moderate and uſeful part in ſociety—or, is the amaſſing of riches the grand purpoſe you have in view?—Let us ſee what this leads to. There are only three channels in which wealth can flow. It muſt either flow into the cheſt, and be hoarded—or it muſt be conſumed in exorbitant expence—or it muſt adminiſter to our own moderate wants, and the neceſſities of others. The grand ſtream, it is to be feared, will flow in unneceſſary expence. The bounds of moderation are ſoon exceeded; and the great inlets to corruption opened. When this is the caſe, the rich merchant not only corrupts himſelf, but his abounding wealth tends to corrupt all around him.

From the merchant, and man of buſineſs, let us turn to men of profeſſion. Let the lawyer be called. You are the grand advocate of truth and juſtice. It is your great part to oppoſe law to oppreſſion—to ſtand up in defence of innocence overawed by opulence; in ſhort, to be that reſpectable character in a community, which endeavours ſtrenuouſly to make law, without fear or favour, a barrier againſt wickedneſs.—This is the noble light in which you ought to appear, when acting conſcientiouſly in that ſtation in which you are placed. This would make you a moſt uſeful and reſpectable member of ſociety.

Let us now try you by your uſual conduct.—Is not your profeſſion conſidered merely as the means of obtaining wealth? Do you not take either ſide as your fee directs? Do you never make yourſelf a partner with guilt, by defending it? There may be doubtful caſes; of theſe I ſpeak not. I ſpeak only of caſes in which guilt is palpable. Do you never then, I repeat, make yourſelf a party with guilt by defending it? You juſtly conſider in your pleadings, the *thief*, and the *receiver of ſtolen goods*, in the ſame light. Are you then, who defend an injury, at all better than he who commits it? In

my

my judgment you are worſe. The knave is guilty of a ſingle fraud. You are guilty of a fraud under the ſanction of law. Beſides, you act on a more determined principle: you have more knowledge, and leſs temptation.

Let us next call the phyſician. You have ſtudied the human body, and the nature of ſuch diſorders as afflict it; and you may often be an inſtrument in the hands of Providence, to reſtore health, and prolong life. But are theſe the great ends to which you pay attention? Do you conſider yourſelf in the light of an inſtrument of God, adminiſtering to the health of mankind, and honeſtly and fairly diſcharging your duty in that ſtation? Or is the idea of a fee always uppermoſt in your mind? To continue it, do you never protract diſorders? Do you never preſcribe unneceſſary medicines to aſſiſt ſuch of your profeſſion as may afterwards aſſiſt you? Do you continue hanging about a ſick-bed, when you have no hope of doing good, without informing ſome relation of the hopeleſs ſtate of the caſe? If you do any of theſe things, conſult your conſcience on the occaſion, and if it be not a hardened one, it will inform you, you

are acting as diſhoneſt a part, as if you had taken advantage of your neighbour's ignorance, and had ſold him a bargain for a pound, which was not worth a ſhilling.—But is it not aſtoniſhing, my good friend, that you who attend the death-beds of ſo many, and ſee in ſo ſtrong a light the vanity of all human things, ſhould not, above all others, get hold of this obvious truth, that honeſty and fair dealing, and ſimplicity of behaviour, ſhould be dearer to you than a thouſand fees?

Let us next call the ſoldier. Yours is a generous profeſſion. One ſhould ſuppoſe, that the world by this time might have found its happineſs beſt obtained by quiet and peaceable intercourſe—that war and bloodſhed, and rapine, and devaſtation, were general calamities—and that mankind would be moſt happy in the enjoyment of ſocial commerce, imparting to each other what one wanted, and another had in profuſion.

But this is not the caſe. Mankind cannot be brought to think in this manner. So many furious and ungoverned paſſions abound in the world, that, when aided by power, they are continually working

ing up quarrels, and committing acts of outrage. As this is the case, people must be on their guard, and opposition becomes necessary.

Here the gallant soldier steps forth. Give me, says he, to his country, only a bare maintenance, (it is all I desire,) and I will devote myself to your service. I will study the various ways in which your enemies can attack you; and I will endeavour to find out proper methods to oppose them. In the mean time, I shall never consider my life as my own, but be always ready to risk it for your sake.

This is the language of a true soldier, than which nothing can be more exalted. It was this character, which, in ancient times, attained the name of *heroism*. But does the modern soldier, in general, possess, in any degree, this noble spirit? Courage, I presume, he has, but unless his courage be founded in religion, I should fear its temper would be very unequal *. It is founded on a warm constitution—on a sense of shame—on the pomp and noise of war, which dispel reflection.

* Who combats bravely, is not always brave;
He dreads a death-bed like the vilest slave. POPE.

Remove theſe incentives to his courage, and he becomes a mere coward: impreſs him with ſuch ſentiments, as the world calls honourable, and it is equal to him, whether he riſk his life in the field, or in a brothel. He ſwears, he drinks, he ſwaggers, he games, he blaſphemes, he gives a looſe to all his paſſions, and though he has not only the common chances of mortality againſt him, but the chances alſo of war, with the courage of a hero, he braves the terrors of damnation.

In the rear of this group, let us call the churchman. You have dedicated yourſelf to the ſervice of religion. You have engaged to make the ſcriptures your ſtudy, and that you will deliver them as purely as you can to the people. You engage that you will diſcourage ſin, and promote religion by all the means in your power; and particularly, by ſetting an example as nearly as you can, to the purity of that goſpel you teach.

Let us ſee how you perform all this In the firſt place, how have you prepared yourſelf for your

your employment? Did you ſpend your chief time in ſtudying the ſcriptures, and the beſt books that have been written on religious ſubjects? or, were you ſatisfied with juſt being able to paſs an examination? Is leſs time and pains, think you, neceſſary to qualify a man to teach the goſpel, than to learn ſome trade or profeſſion? With what views did you enter the church? Did you conſcientiouſly mean to perform your duty faithfully; or merely, with ſome ſecular view, as the beſt way of getting forward in the world?—If, however, the early part of your life has been inconſiderate and faulty, now you have entered the church, and have had time to reflect on what you have ſo ſeriouſly undertaken, do you endeavour, by a proper behaviour, to make amends for what is paſt?—What is your common employment? Do you conſcientiouſly diſcharge the duties of your profeſſion? or is it the great buſineſs of your life to go on, as you began, and to employ yourſelf chiefly in taking ſuch ſteps as may advance you in the church?—Part of your time perhaps may be employed in ſtudy: What are your ſtudies? Do you make up for the deficiencies of your youth, by ſtudying the ſcriptures now in earneſt, and ſuch books as may furniſh you with knowledge proper for your pro-

feſſion? Or are your ſtudies entirely thrown on ſuch ſubjects as are foreign to it? You are a grammarian perhaps, or a critic, or a chemiſt, or a poet, or a painter, or any thing but a divine. To be any of theſe merely for amuſement, is allowable; but to be any of them more than for amuſement, deſerves a ſevere rebuke.—But perhaps your amuſements are ſtill leſs creditable. Inſtead of being quiet or domeſtic, they may be noiſy and riotous; your time may be ſpent among hounds and horſes, and in company diſcreditable to a clergyman—or your time may be ſpent in a round of idle engagements—in cards, or other diſſipating amuſements—while every hour perhaps, as far as your good example is concerned, had better been annihilated.

Thus we have examined ſeveral characters; which, if they do not make up the greateſt part of the community, will at leaſt, whether good or bad, give the ruling colour to the manners of the whole. Many, no doubt, there are of each claſs, who live up to their duty; yet there is ground to fear, there is leaven enough remaining to infect a very great maſs.

It may be added farther on the ſubject—that as God has formed individuals for ſociety, their mutual happineſs is ſo connected, that the individual will always find his own intereſt the beſt ſerved, by honeſtly ſerving the public; and the public in the end will infallible be ruined, if it be deſerted by the individual *.

* Now ſee him launch'd into the world at large:
If prieſt, ſupinely doſing o'er his charge;
Their fleece his pillow, and his weekly drawl,
Though ſhort, too long, the price he pays for all:
If lawyer, loud whatever cauſe he plead;
But proudeſt of the worſt, if that ſucceed:
Perhaps a grave phyſician, gathering fees,
Punctually paid for lengthening out diſeaſe.
If arms engage him, he devotes to ſport
His date of life, ſo likely to be ſhort;
A ſoldier may be any thing, if brave.

COWPER.

XI.

MATT. xxvi. 26.

AND AS THEY WERE EATING, JESUS TOOK BREAD AND BLESSED IT, AND BRAKE IT, AND GAVE IT TO THE DISCIPLES, AND SAID, TAKE, EAT, THIS IS MY BODY. AND HE TOOK THE CUP AND GAVE IT TO THEM, SAYING, DRINK YE ALL OF THIS, FOR THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, WHICH IS SHED FOR MANY, FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.

JESUS Chriſt being now about to perform the laſt great act of divine love, in dying to make atonement for ſin, inſtituted this holy ſacrament, the day before he ſuffered. The plain, and ſhort account of it, as collected from the ſeveral evangeliſts, is this.

As

As he was commemorating the Jewiſh paſſover, which (as a type now fulfilled) was henceforth to be aboliſhed, he took bread, and giving thanks *, he brake it into portions, and gave it among his diſciples, ordering them to eat it *in remembrance of his death.* Wine he diſtributed in the ſame manner.

From this plain account of the Lord's ſupper, which is all the account we have of its inſtitution, much myſtery hath been deduced, and much hath been ſaid, that hath tended perhaps greatly to obſcure it—to draw it from its original ſimplicity—and to affright well-meaning people from partaking of it. It appears from this account, to be merely and ſolely a *rite of commemoration.* In a humble

* The two words uſed to ſignify this act, are ευλογησας and ευχαριστησας, which ſeem to imply the ſame thing, as the evangeliſts uſe them promiſcuouſly. St. Matthew uſes the former word; St. Luke the latter; St. Mark and St. Paul uſe both. Theſe words alſo are uſed on various other occaſions—as before the diſtribution of the loaves and fiſhes—in bleſſing children—and in giving thanks to God before a common meal. It does not appear therefore, that any peculiar holineſs was meant to be conveyed by either of theſe words to the ſimple elements; and therefore, perhaps, the title of the prayer of *conſecration*, as it is called, might be advantageouſly changed into ſome word taken from either of the original words ευλογεω, or ευχαριστεω.

ſenſe

ſenſe of our fallen ſtate, and of our bleſſed Redeemer's meritorious atonement, we eat bread and drink wine in a ſolemn manner, in *remembrance of his death.*—St. Paul adds, *as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this wine, ye do ſhew forth the Lord's death till he come*—that is, the wine and the bread are to be a kind of viſible memorials of the death of Chriſt, through every age of the church. St. Paul's words allude to a Jewiſh cuſtom at the paſſover. It was uſual for ſome younger perſon to aſk an elder, what was the meaning of that rite? the other informed him, and this was called *ſhewing it forth.*

Now this ſeems to be the whole ſcriptural account of the inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper. As to the paſſage of St. John, (vi. 53.) learned men, I think, have ſufficiently ſhewn, it has no relation to this ſubject *.—St. Paul, indeed, in the paſſage above cited, (1 Cor. xi. 20.) ſays many ſevere things to the Corinthians on their mode of receiving it. But theirs was a particular caſe; and unleſs that caſe had exiſted, would probably not have been ſaid at all. The Lord's ſupper was at that time adminiſtered in private houſes, and accompanied with what they

* See Dr. Bell on this ſubject.

called

called *love-feaſts*, which introduced much intemperance; ſo that what the apoſtle ſays to the Corinthians in this paſſage, is by no means applicable to the Chriſtians of theſe days.

Pious divines have ſpoken much of the frame of mind in which this holy rite ſhould be received. And all this is well. The Lord's ſupper naturally ſuggeſts deep contrition for ſin, and thankfulneſs for the great atonement of a Saviour's death. This is clearly implied in the words of the original inſtitution, *do this in remembrance of me:* in remembrance of what I have done for you. At the ſame time, I doubt, whether pious formularies, which recommend ſecluſion, and other ſtrictneſſes, before the ſacrament, are of much uſe. They imply ſome myſteriouſneſs in the inſtitution; and may alſo, from too much tenſion at one time, lead the mind to remit too much at another. A well-diſpoſed Chriſtian coming on the ſudden to the Lord's table, may ſurely, with only ſuch pious thoughts about him, as the emergency ſuggeſts, be a very acceptable communicant.

XII.

An ANALYSIS of the SCHEME of CHRISTIANITY.

HEB. xii. 14.

WITHOUT HOLINESS NO ONE SHALL SEE THE LORD.

ADAM, though placed in a ſtate of trial, was created perfect; and therefore wanted no Saviour. By his fall, he loſt his purity and innocence, and forfeited his hopes of everlaſting happineſs. To reſtore this *loſs*, a Saviour was, in the adorable goodneſs of God, immediately promiſed? and to this promiſe the rite of ſacrifice was added, to preſerve among mankind an idea, that this ſalvation was to ariſe from ſome mode of atonement.

As

As the world advanced in age, the Jewiſh nation was ſet apart, as the great mean of continuing theſe ideas. It was the uniform endeavour of the law and the prophets, to raiſe man to his *original holineſs*. "*Ceaſe to do evil; learn to do well,*" was the open or implied language of both: while a variety of rites, as well before, as after the Jewiſh eſtabliſhment, continued the great idea of an atonement.

In due time, the promiſed Saviour appeared. The conſtant tenor of his diſcourſes and example was the counter-part of what the law and the prophets had taught: "*Purify your affections; change* "*your hearts and lives; become new creatures*"—thus reſtoring yourſelves, with the aſſiſtance of God's grace, as nearly as you can, to that *ſtate of purity* you have loſt.—Then too the type of ſacrifice was realiſed, and the great atonement made.

After Chriſt's reſurrection, his diſciples, inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt, continued to unfold their maſter's doctrines. The *purified heart* was ſtill the great object, though in itſelf ineffectual to ſalvation, (becauſe neceſſarily imperfect,) without the merits of a Saviour. As a mean of attaining this *purified ſtate*, they inſiſt on *faith* and *holy prayer*.—Thus, the Old and New Teſtament are connected,

connected, and the great intention of both appears to be the *reſtoration* of man, as far as can be, to that purity of life, which he had loſt.

This view of Chriſtianity is, I ſhould think, an argument of great weight againſt all thoſe opinions, which lay the *ſtreſs of religion* on any thing but a *holy life*, through *faith* in Chriſt.

XIII.

HEB. xiii. 18.

WE TRUST WE HAVE A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

I SHALL conſider this ſubject under the heads of a *bad* conſcience, a *good* conſcience—and an *eaſy* conſcience.

By a *bad* conſcience, we mean a conſcience harrowed with guilt—reſtleſs—diſtreſſed—rejecting all enjoyment.

By a *good* conſcience, we mean a conſcience not perfectly at reſt; for the moſt religious man lives in a ſtate of continual ſtrife with himſelf: but a conſcience, however, not diſturbed with thoſe boiſterous ſtorms, which affect the *bad* conſcience, tho' its ſurface is ſeldom perfectly unruffled.

The *eaſy* conſcience, on the other hand, is always undiſturbed. Nothing affects it. It is in conſtant repoſe.

Of theſe three modes of conſcience, which is the *beſt*, is eaſily determined. But perhaps a wiſe man would prefer a *bad* conſcience to an *eaſy* one. The *bad* conſcience may be drawn by its reſtleſs and inſupportable feelings to a ſtate of repentance; but the *eaſy* conſcience, ariſing either from *hardened guilt*, or a *careleſs life*, having nothing to rouſe it, puts its poſſeſſor into a very dangerous ſituation.

Let no man therefore, without careful examination, judge of the *ſecurity* of his caſe, by the *eaſe* of his conſcience. No good man can have a conſcience at *perfect eaſe*. The beſt muſt ſay with the apoſtle, *we truſt we have a good conſcience*.—that is, we hope, through the mercy of God, and merits of our bleſſed Saviour, we have nothing upon it which will endanger our ſalvation.

XIV.

MARK, xvi. 16.

HE THAT BELIEVETH, AND IS BAPTIZED, SHALL BE SAVED; BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT, SHALL BE DAMNED.

OUR bleſſed Lord, a little before his aſcenſion, gave his laſt charge to his diſciples in the words of the text, which ſeem to bear this meaning. "I ſend you out to preach the goſpel to the world. They who accept the gracious offer it makes, ſhall be ſaved. But they who refuſe it, whether through negligence or wickedneſs, muſt take the conſequence of their refuſal."

This text, however, though it is capable of ſo natural and eaſy a ſenſe, has often, I think, been miſapplied by well-meaning Chriſtians. Our Saviour ſays ſimply, *he that believeth*. But theſe religioniſts tell you *preciſely what* you are to *believe*.

Nor is there much amiſs in that, if they did not bind it upon you with an anathema.

Mr. Locke, after examining all the paſſages of ſcripture which relate to faith in Chriſt, aſſerts, that no propoſition is held out as a *neceſſary article of belief*, but barely that *Jeſus Chriſt is the Meſſiah* *. And indeed the *apoſtle's creed* ſeems to be little more than this idea dilated, to which every one may add his own private creed, on ſuch articles as he thinks he finds ſufficient foundation for in ſcripture. But he has perhaps no right to go farther. By putting his own opinions into ſcripture-language, (which may eaſily be done, without attending to contexts,) he may unhappily miſlead others, even on goſpel authority.

The prejudices of mankind (cleaving to them from numberleſs circumſtances, which they often cannot help) are ſo various—their modes of thinking ſo different—and the ſenſe of ſcripture often ſo undetermined—that there can be no orthodoxy in *opinion*, according to any one man's ſtandard.

In *practice* we may all be orthodox: the rules of life are laid down ſo preciſely, that no true believer in Jeſus can err or vary from another.

* See his Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity.

XV.

PHIL. ii. 4.

LOOK NOT EVERY MAN ON HIS OWN THINGS; BUT EVERY MAN ALSO ON THE THINGS OF OTHERS.

THE chriſtian religion is throughout a plan of happineſs, calculated as well for this world as the next. In the next world we believe this grand ſcheme of felicity takes place without interruption. But in this world it meets with much oppoſition, as may be expected, both from the natural depravity of mankind, and the unavoidable circumſtances of a ſtate of trial. Thus much however may, with truth be aſſerted, that the more we practiſe the precepts of the goſpel, the greater ſum of happineſs will be produced. One might run over them all, and ſhew how each of them hath a tendency to promote peace and happineſs among

mankind; but I ſhall at preſent only conſider the precept of the text: *look not every man on his own things; but every man alſo on the things of another.*

The common maxim among men now is, for every man to look after his own things, knowing that if *he* do not look after them himſelf, *nobody* elſe will. But if all men lived by the precept before us, our affairs would always be in better hands than in our own. On every emergency, a number of people would be ready inſtantly to aſſiſt us, and would give us more effectual aſſiſtance, than we could give ourſelves.

We have an image of this kind of benevolence in the early ſtate of Chriſtianity, when *the multitude that believed were of one heart and of one ſoul; neither ſaid any of them, that ought of the things which he poſſeſſed were his own.* Of courſe it followed, as we read farther, that *there was none among them that lacked.*

A ſtate of equality among *pious Chriſtians*, would certainly be a ſtate of the greateſt *happineſs* on earth: but as the world is *now conſtituted*, it would be a ſtate of the greateſt *miſery*.

XVI.

MARK, xii 37.

THE COMMON PEOPLE HEARD HIM GLADLY.

IT is ſurprizing that all people did not *hear him gladly*. But prejudice and vice are deaf: they refuſe *to hear even the voice of the charmer;* wiſdom is no charmer in their ears.

This ſubject might be treated by conſidering what qualities are required to hear the *goſpel gladly* —and what are the chief obſtacles which *prevent its* being ſo heard. The concluſion might be drawn up in the form of a conſolation to the *common people.*

XVII.

ROM. vii. 24.

O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM, WHO SHALL DELIVER ME FROM THE BODY OF THIS DEATH?—I THANK MY GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

IN this paſſage is held out the great contraſt between the voice of *nature* and the voice of *grace*.

Nature begins with lamentable complaints. I feel myſelf ſubject to a variety of wayward paſſions and appetites, which are continually miſleading me. I live in a world, which abounds with objects ſuited to them. Every ſenſe hath its gratification; and every gratification leads to ſin. I reſolve one day, and fail the next. I am overwhelmed with iniquity. Wherever I look, I ſee the gloom of miſery—no where the beam of hope.

If

If there be a righteous ruler, and a ſtate of retribution, what have I to expect but eternal perdition! *O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death!*

To theſe deſpairing moans of *Nature*, *Chriſtianity* graciouſly replies, I will deliver you. Take refuge under the promiſes of the goſpel. Taſte and ſee, how gracious the Lord is. The goſpel will teach you how you came into this miſerable ſtate. The goſpel will ſhew you the remedy, which God hath provided to deliver you from it. It will furniſh you with motives, and with aſſiſtance alſo, to calm your paſſions, and moderate your love for the world. It will ſhew you the neceſſity of repentance. It will grant you pardon for your ſins, through the death of a Saviour.—It will teach you how to die—and conduct you after death to everlaſting happineſs.

In this view of things, nature revives, and breaks into a ſong of praiſe. I am ſatisfied—I am happy—*I thank my God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord!*—

XVIII.

LUKE, vi. 26.

WOE UNTO YOU WHEN ALL MEN SPEAK WELL OF YOU.

THIS text is ſometimes applied by divines to modern times. Whereas, I apprehend, it ſhould chiefly be applied to the Chriſtians of the firſt age.

Our Saviour, with a view to fortify the early preachers of the goſpel againſt the ill-uſage of the world, tells them plainly what reception they ſhould find after his departure, Mankind in general ſhould be armed againſt them — ſhould hate them—ſhould ſeparate from their company—ſhould reproach them, and *caſt out their name as evil.* He ſoon after adds the text, *Woe unto you when all men ſhall ſpeak well of you.* As they were about

about to eſtabliſh a new inſtitution, intended to overturn all the religious prejudices, and idolatrous practices of the world, it would certainly follow, that if they and their doctrine were received with *general reſpect*, they muſt have been remiſs in the execution of their commiſſion. In the parallel place of St. Matthew, we find *perſecution* coupled with defamation: *bleſſed are ye, when men ſhall revile you and perſecute you.* We may as well therefore, ſuppoſe a *woe* pronounced upon all who do not ſuffer perſecution.

The whole hiſtory of the apoſtles ſhews religion in thoſe early times, to be always under the ſame cloud of defamation. *Do I ſeek*, ſays St. Paul, *to pleaſe men? If I pleaſed men, I ſhould not be the ſervant of Chriſt.* And this is a language which all the apoſtles might have held, as well as St. Paul.

Upon the whole, I would obſerve, it ſeems to be of no ſervice to religion, to draw paſſages of ſcripture from apoſtolical to modern times. Error is often engrafted on ſuch violent applications. The application of the *woe*, therefore, to modern times, may miſlead weak Chriſtians to form undue eſtimates of their own lives, and falſe judgments of the characters of others. For, in truth, the text taken

taken literally, ſeems to *oppoſe experience*. Though all men may not *ſpeak well* of the good Chriſtian, who may have his various failings, and indiſcretions; yet *in a Chriſtian country*, the *woe*, I think, chiefly belongs to him, of whom all men *ſpeak ill*.

It may be added, that a man's character is a pledge to the community; and it is not agreeable to the goſpel to deſtroy any bond of union among men.

XIX.

MATT. XV. 9.

TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.

IN many parts of ſcripture a diſtinction is made between the *commandments of God* and the *commandments of men.*

But why? ſays the objector; which of the commandments of God is carried higher than the commandments of men? He then boaſts, that Chriſtianity hath done little in explaining morals, and will readily quote Socrates, Tully, Antoninus, and other philoſophers, to ſhew how far human reaſon was able to carry the commandments of men. In what, he aſks, lies the difference?

In the firſt place, the Chriſtian law is in many inſtances more refined and pure. Gratitude and love

love to God is a principle of action never before held out. Univerſal charity, the love of our enemies, humility, and heavenly-mindedneſs, were never the commandments of men, tho' highly productive of human happineſs.

But even on a ſuppoſition, the heathen and chriſtian morality were in themſelves of *equal value*, let it, ſecondly, be conſidered, that the elevated ſentiments of the philoſopher (which we wiſh not to depreciate) were never calculated for *general uſe*. They were intended merely for his own ſchool, and were indeed written in a ſublime language, beyond the intellect of the vulgar; whereas, the precepts of Chriſtianity were intended for all mankind—for the loweſt orders, as well as the higheſt.

Beſides, the philoſopher had no power to inforce his precepts; whereas the precepts of Chriſtianity are the general code of all Chriſtian people, and ſanctioned not only by human laws, but by ſuch penalties as no human laws can provide.

Laſtly, let it be obſerved, that while the commandments of men chiefly *forbid* crimes, the commandments of God *prevent* them. The commandments of men reach only the *action*; the commandments of God reach the *heart* and the

motive. And this is one of the moſt peculiar characteriſtics of the commandments of God.

N. B. A ſermon of this kind, inforcing the morality of the goſpel beyond the morality of natural reaſon, when carried even to its higheſt extent, might be uſeful in ſome congregations.

XX.

EXOD. xxiii. 2.

THOU SHALT NOT FOLLOW A MULTITUDE TO DO EVIL.

WHEN we view man in a pleaſing light, we conſider him as formed for ſociety, from which he draws his greateſt comforts; mutually giving and receiving benefits.

But we *may* conſider man in a very different light. Moſes, from whom we have the leſſon of the text, knew enough of the Iſraelites, to think a precept of this kind highly neceſſary. Their great propenſity in following a *mulitude to evil*, appeared on various occaſions. The affair of the golden calf—of Corah and his company, and many other rebellious incidents in their hiſtory, ſhew how inclined they were to run into miſchievous aſſociations.

The

The rule before us however, has a deeper foundation than the hiſtory of Moſes. It is founded in human nature. Man, in his worſt light, may be conſidered as a gregarious animal, naturally running in herds. And as he is alſo (*naturally* too, we believe,) a noxious animal—like wolves, and other noxious animals, he is moſt miſchievous in a herd.—The danger of his getting into miſchief, by following a multitude, ariſes from theſe conſiderations.

Firſt, a multitude have no principle of action. They are led by ſtrong prejudices and paſſions, but without reaſon or judgment, which are always loſt in a croud.

Secondly, as a multitude have no principle of action in themſelves, they are diſpoſed to follow an artful leader into miſchief of any kind.

For, thirdly, it muſt be remembered, that theſe artful leaders have always ſome private end of their own, which is commonly very different from the general intereſt of the multitude.

Fourthly, all ſenſe of ſhame is loſt in a multitude. It can faſten on no ſingle perſon. So that even well-diſpoſed people, thus diſperſing their guilt among others, never own it themſelves,

though, in fact, the guilt is not *diſperſed*, but *multiplied*.

Fifthly, there is no knowing what lengths a multitude may go. As reaſon and judgment are given up, men may be led, in the madneſs of party, to do things, which in a temperate hour, might have ſhocked the worſt of them.

Laſtly, it ſhould be conſidered, that although it may be eaſy to avoid a multitude, yet when a man has once joined it, he cannot eaſily eſcape. He forms connections with his party; and if he leave it, he is thought a renegade by one party, and is always ſuſpected by the other.

Theſe remarks chiefly reſpect riotious and lawleſs aſſemblies; but, in a degree, they affect all aſſociations of men that are not warranted by ſome uſeful end.

XXI.

I JOHN, iii. 9.

WHOSOEVER IS BORN OF GOD DOTH NOT COMMIT SIN.——HE CANNOT SIN BECAUSE HE IS BORN OF GOD.

SOME well-meaning people have conceived from this text, and others of a ſimilar caſt, that the *elect of God*, as they are called, may arrive at a ſinleſs ſtate of perfection. The more enlightened of theſe ſectaries, to whom this opinion is aſcribed, hold it probably in ſome qualified ſenſe; though in its moſt unqualified ſenſe, it is often held, and preached by ſome enthuſiaſtic people *. Now in

* The following fact was related to me by a perſon of great truth. A ſectary of this deſcription had put an end to his own life. When ſome of his neighbours were lamenting his caſe to his brother, and particularly the unhappy circumſtances of his going out of the world with ſuch a crime on his head: "It is of no conſequence," ſaid the other, "he was *ſealed*."

oppoſition to this doctrine, (though to oppoſe it has ſomething of the air of fighting a ſhadow,) I ſhould *firſt* obſerve, that *it ſeems falſe*—and, *ſecondly*, that if it were only *doubtful*, it could anſwer no good end to teach it.

In the firſt place, it ſeems to be *falſe*. This, one ſhould think, might ſufficiently appear from a knowledge of ourſelves, which muſt be very ſuperficial, if it do not convince us, that we are ſinful creatures.—that the beſt of us have much to anſwer for *at all times*, either in thought, word, or deed —and very little poſitive goodneſs to balance againſt ſo much ſin.

The *falſehood* of this doctrine, appears farther from the nature of a ſtate of trial, in which the ſcriptures ſuppoſe all mankind to be placed. The Chriſtian life is repreſented as a ſtate of continual warfare, in which we are inſtructed to put on the whole armour of God—and to be always wreſtling againſt our ſpiritual enemies. It would be endleſs to quote all the paſſages of ſcripture that excite us to *conſtant* care and watchfulneſs. Theſe rules are given to *all* without reſtriction; while the goſpel promiſes happineſs to thoſe only who *endure to the end.*

The

The falſehood of this doctrine appears from *fact*, as well as from *reaſoning*. We have examples of ſome of the greateſt ſcriptural characters betrayed into ſin—Moſes—David—St. Peter—and many others. St. Paul ſpeaks of himſelf as under a poſſibility of being a *caſtaway*. And ſhall the modern profeſſor ſuppoſe himſelf more infallible than all theſe eminent characters? Can he hear undiſmayed the text, pronouncing, *Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall*, and not be terrified at his own preſumption?

But, ſays the maintainer of this opinion, there is no contradicting a plain declaration of ſcripture. St. John expreſsly ſays, *that whoſoever is born of God doth not commit ſin.*

Surely not, while he continues to be *born of God*—that is, while he is under the influence of religion. But it does not follow, that he cannot commit ſin, when is *not born of God*—that is, when he is not under the influence of religion.——Or if that explanation be not ſatisfactory, the text certainly admits an explanation from that common mode of ſpeaking among the Jews, of putting the impoſſibility of a thing for the improbability of it. So that when it is ſaid, *whoſoever is born*

of God cannot commit ſin, nothing may be meant, but that it is improbable.

If neither of theſe explanations pleaſe, and the literal ſenſe is ſtill inſiſted on, we may oppoſe it with other texts, which ſpeak a language directly oppoſite.—St. John tells us, that *if we ſay we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in us.* In this paſſage, the apoſtle not only aſſerts, that no man is free from ſin; but by uſing the firſt perſon plural, ſeems to unite himſelf with ſinners.—The ſame apoſtle tells us, *that the whole world lies in wickedneſs.* And again, that *in many things we offend all.* And if theſe texts are not ſufficient, we could follow them with numberleſs others, which either directly, or by fair implication, ſay the ſame thing.—Laſtly, the very words of this text itſelf, ſeem to militate againſt the concluſion drawn from it. Whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit ſin, *for his ſeed remaineth in him*—that is, becauſe he perſeveres in the true faith. But if his ſeed doth *not* remain in him —that is, if he gives up his faith, he certainly is not born of God, but is in a capacity to commit ſin.

More than enough, I think, has been ſaid, to ſhew the doctrine of *attainable perfection* to be *falſe*.

But

But if this be not allowed, it muſt ſurely be granted, that enough has been ſaid to prove it to be *doubtful*. In this caſe it will follow, ſecondly, that it can anſwer no good end to advance it.—A *good* end it cannot anſwer, for it certainly cannot make a man *ſafer* than he was before. He will not pretend to ſay, he ſhall be judged by his own opinion. It was more at leaſt than St. Paul would venture to affirm.

On the whole, it ſeems, to be a doctrine only calculated to ſwell a man with pride and ſelf-conſequence—to put him off his guard, and to ſtop all his farther purſuits of improvement. If he really believe he cannot ſin, what need he require more? A careleſs life is juſt as effectual as the moſt attentive one.

XXII.

PHIL. ii. 3.

IN LOWLINESS OF MIND LET EACH ESTEEM OTHER BETTER THAN THEMSELVES.

IF we take this precept *literally*, it plainly leads into abſurdity. He who feels he endeavours to live a conſcientious life, cannot but think himſelf better than he whom he ſees living in an openly irreligious manner. The precept therefore muſt be limited. It was given by the apoſtle to his Philippian converts—that is, to people whom we may ſuppoſe to have been well-diſpoſed Chriſtians, and all equally, at leaſt in appearance, regular in their lives. Still however, notwithſtanding this outward appearance of equality, there might be great difference in their hearts; and as the heart is the ſeat of religion, there was ſtill room for one man to be more religious than another.

But

But, as no man knows the heart of another ſo well as he knows his own, in which he cannot but be acquainted with many things amiſs, humility will naturally incline him to ſuppoſe the hearts of others are better than his own, and of courſe *to eſteem his neighbour better than himſelf.*—The apoſtle's injunction therefore is given, we ſee, to people nearly of the ſame condition, and chiefly indeed reſpects *the heart.*

It may however, in part, have a reference to *actions.* An action, evidently vicious, is out of the queſtion; but as all actions take their colour from the motives which produce them, no man can judge truly of the *motives* of others. Of courſe he can know as little of their *actions.* But as he knows his own motives, it is humble in him to think better of the *actions* of others, which are not palpably wrong, than of his own.

XXIII.

MATT. xxiii. 23.

THESE OUGHT YE TO HAVE DONE, AND NOT TO LEAVE THE OTHER UNDONE.

OUR Saviour applies theſe words to the Scribes and Phariſees, who neglected the precepts of religion through an attachment to its ceremonies. But the rebuke is equally applicable to all who neglect matters of conſequence for the ſake of trifles.—In the following diſcourſe, therefore, I ſhall not apply it in a religious ſenſe, but merely as relating to the two points of *employment* and *amuſement*.

Every man has, or ought to have, ſome employment in life; and if he be born exempt from the *neceſſity* of it, ſtill he ought, in ſome ſhape, to find it for himſelf—that is, he ſhould fill up, in *ſome uſe-*

ful

ful manner, his ſtation in ſociety, and not be what the very heathen thought an abominable character —*a mere conſumer of the fruits of the earth.*—This employment, whatever it is, ſhould be conſidered among the things that *ought to be done.*

But beſides the *employment*, moſt people have alſo their *amuſement*, which may be reckoned among the things which need not *be left undone*, on a ſuppoſition it is *innocent*, and not carried to exceſs. It has been obſerved, that however buſy our lives may be, we always find ſome time for a favourite amuſement. But the miſchief is, the amuſement often uſurps the upper hand. Thus, a clergyman may be fond of muſic or painting. Both are liberal and innocent amuſements, and may be properly indulged. But he ought always to have in his mind the uſeful caution of the text. His parochial duties are the things that *ought to be done*, though he need not *leave the other undone.* The *employment* is the object, the *amuſement* the relaxation: but in proportion as the amuſement gains too much ground, the employment is neglected. Even ſcience is only an amuſement, when it ſtands in competition with the grand duties of the clerical profeſſion.

In

In looking into the world, however, we ſometimes find, that contrary to the general bent of mankind, the *employment* ſtifles the *amuſement*. One of the ſtrongeſt antidotes againſt this general *love of amuſement*, is a paſſion equally diſreputable, and that is, the *love of gain*. If we examine the generality of *employments*, we ſhall find thoſe are the moſt ſteadily purſued, and receive the feweſt avocations from *amuſement*, in which the emolument depends moſt on our induſtry, and the exertion of our abilities. The profeſſion of phyſic furniſhes a ſtrong inſtance—the law furniſhes a ſtronger—and trade the ſtrongeſt. While the clergyman—the ſoldier—and beyond both, the country gentleman, whoſe incomes depend leſs on perſonal induſtry, give more into amuſement.—It is a piteous view of mankind, no doubt, that one bad propenſity ſhould be corrected by another. But the more we look among men, the more truth we ſhall find in the goſpel account of the natural pravity of human nature: while one-half of the world is immerſt in its buſineſs; and the other half, miſled by its pleaſures; the moderate in both can hardly find room between.

In

In the mean time, if we conſider things in their true light, we ſhall ſee the goodneſs of God, in ordaining *buſineſs* and *amuſement* to relieve each other. Buſineſs of every kind, but eſpecially where gain is concerned, has a tendency to contract the mind, and draw it to *one point*. Amuſement again, on the other hand, has a tendency to relax the mind; or, in other words, to *diſſipate* it. But, when they are properly mixed, the bad tendency of each is corrected. A little amuſement refreſhes the mind intent on buſineſs, and looſens the prejudices it contracts, from being converſant only with one object; while a proper employment ſtrengthens the mind, and relieves it from that languor which attends conſtant diſſipation.

N. B. This might be wrought into a good clerical ſermon, with the addition of a little more ſcriptural ſanction; and might be preached at a viſitation,

XXIV.

MATT. vi. 2.

VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, THEY HAVE THEIR REWARD.

OUR Saviour is here conſidering the motives of prayer, and aſcribing to each motive that return which it muſt expect. The pious prayer, which is poured out to God in ſecret, finds its way directly to the throne of Grace; while the prayer of the hypocrite meets alſo with its reward; but that reward conſiſts only in the praiſe of men.

Now what our Saviour obſerves of prayer, may be obſerved of every action of our lives, in which morality is concerned. It may be dedicated, if I may ſo ſpeak, either to God or man. An act of temperance, for inſtance, performed on a principle

of pleaſing God, becomes an act of religion. But if it is performed merely for the ſake of procuring health and ſpirits, the motive is not bad, and it may ſtill have its reward; but it is a reward of a lower kind. It may procure us health and ſpirits, but it has no connection with religion.

Thus again, when a man behaves decently merely for the ſake of his character, the motive is allowable; but there is no religion in it. Nothing will be carried to a religious account, but what proceeds from a religious motive.

The great concluſion is, that if we could perſuade ourſelves to make all our actions, in which morality is concerned, acts of *religion*, as well as *acts of prudence*, they might receive, at the ſame time, both their *heavenly* and their *earthly* reward.

XXV.

PSALM ciii. 13.

LIKE AS A FATHER PITIETH HIS OWN CHILDREN, SO IS THE LORD MERCIFUL TO THEM THAT FEAR HIM.

THE *juſtice* and *mercy* of Almighty God are thoſe attributes with which our future hopes and fears are moſt concerned; and the great danger lies in reſting on the latter, without paying a ſufficient attention to the former.

But yet, on the other hand, many a pious ſoul, full of ſenſibilities, may be more dejected with the fears of the Almighty's juſtice, than it reaſonably need be.

Far ſhould I be from ſuggeſting falſe hopes to any perſon on a ſubject ſo near him, as the ſalvation of his ſoul; and, to ſay the truth, it is a more dangerous

dangerous extreme to indulge falſe hopes than falſe fears. Yet when we ſee pious people making their lives miſerable with fears, which ſeem to have no foundation in religion, we cannot help in Chriſtian charity, endeavouring to adminiſter ſome comfort to them.

Now the text I have juſt read, and many other paſſages of a ſimilar kind, may be offered as cordials to a mind thus diſtempered with ſuperſtitious fears.—From ſuch paſſages we may ſpeak in this language.

Conſider how you yourſelf would act as a father. If your ſon's filial piety, in the general conduct of his life, led him to be affectionate and obedient to you, though he might, in ſome inſtances, either not comprehend your meaning, or be ſomewhat remiſs in his obſervance of it, would not you be inclined to paſs over ſuch negligences, if you ſaw plainly, that in his *general conduct* he endeavoured to pleaſe you, and was always hurt when he found he had diſpleaſed you?

Can you conceive then, that the *God of mercy* will treat you with leſs kindneſs, than you would treat your ſon?—God calls himſelf our Father. Our bleſſed Saviour, in the prayer he has given us for daily uſe, enjoins us to call God our Father: and

ſhall not we believe he will act like a Father? are we to ſuppoſe he is a mere nominal Father, without the affections of one? It is, in a degree, impious to believe it. It is calling God's word in queſtion.

If then you are conſcious that you live in the *habitual practice* of no known ſin—if you feel that in the *general conduct of your life* you are deſirous to *pleaſe God*, and always *hurt* when you do any thing that you think will *diſpleaſe him*, why may you not truſt his mercy with your ſalvation? The merits of Chriſt are of no avail, if they do not atone for thoſe ignorances and negligences, which are inherent in human nature. *Like as a father*, therefore, *pityeth his own children, ſo is the Lord merciful to them that fear him.* *Pity* and *mercy* belong to *failings*. If we had no *failings*, we ſhould want *neither*.

XXVI.

EPH. iv. 26.

BE YE ANGRY, AND SIN NOT. LET NOT THE SUN GO DOWN UPON YOUR WRATH.

SOME divines, I think, have gone rather too far when, deſcribing our bleſſed Saviour's character, they will not allow him to have been ever diſcompoſed. We are told *, *he had at the ſame time to ſtruggle with the prejudices, the miſtakes, and miſconſtructions of his friends, and the inveterate rancour of his enemies; but yet he never ſuffered either the one or the other to diſturb the compoſure of his mind.*

If the excellent prelate, from whom this paſſage is taken, means only that our bleſſed Saviour's *mind* alone was undiſturbed, it is moſt probable it

* See Biſhop Porteous's Sermon, vol. i. p. 308.

always was. But as we can judge only from outward expreſſions, it is certain, that on different occaſions he ſhewed ſuch ſigns as indicate *our* diſcompoſure.—In one place, (Mark, iii. 5.) we are told, *he looked round him with anger.* In other places, we are informed, he treated the Scribes and Phariſees with great aſperity of language; and the rebuke he gave St. Peter, was a ſtrong expreſſion of indignation.

It may be added, that his ſhewing a proper diſcompoſure of temper throws a neceſſary light on various circumſtances in the lives and writings of his apoſtles, who likewiſe, on different occaſions, expreſſed their diſpleaſure. Though there are inſtances, in which ſome of them might carry their reſentment too far; yet they ſhould not be deprived of their maſter's example, as far as it might ſerve them.

It may be added alſo, that as our Saviour intended to give all his followers an example in every thing, he might likewiſe intend us an example in regulating the paſſion of anger. The paſſion of anger ſurely was not implanted in us without reaſon; and it is an excellent leſſon to us, that our Saviour was never *diſcompoſed* by

by any of the *trifling accidents of life;* but only where *truth, religion, and virtue* were concerned.—By throwing theſe lights on our bleſſed Saviour's diſcompoſure, I think cavillers are in the beſt manner ſilenced.

XXVII.

2 COR. X. 5.

BRINGING INTO CAPTIVITY EVERY THOUGHT TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST.

THIS text may be illuſtrated, by conſidering the nature of a ſtate of captivity. A captive is a vanquiſhed enemy. He hath made reſiſtance; but, all reſiſtence being now over, he is ſubdued; and having forfeited his life by his oppoſition, in order to redeem it, he now ſubmits to the mercy of his conqueror.

Let us apply this to religion, and we ſhall have the general meaning of the text. We have all reſiſted our bleſſed Lord, and maintained a war againſt him, under the banners of ſin. Some, with the folly of madmen, obſtinately continue a war, which they know muſt end in their ruin. Others

in

in time ſubmit, accept their forfeit lives from their conqueror, obey his will, and are received into mercy.

The captivity of our *wicked thoughts* is implied, as well as of our *actions.* Religion hath made no conqueſt over us, till, in the language of the text, *we bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt.*

XXVIII.

PROV. xii. 26.

THE RIGHTEOUS IS MORE EXCELLENT THAN HIS NEIGHBOUR.

THIS implies, that his neighbour *is not righteous*; for if they had both been righteous, there could have been no difference in point of excellence.

The word *excellence* implies *general ſuperiority*; but at preſent, I mean only to conſider that ſuperiority, which the righteous man enjoys over his unrighteous neighbour, in *point of character and eſteem*.

However inclined men are to knavery themſelves, they all like to deal with people of character; for religion is always ſuppoſed to be the beſt guard to honeſty. When men of licentious manners, therefore,

fore, laugh at the religious man, it is only with a view to take off the edge of obloquy from themſelves, and to bring down his character to a level with their own. When things come to proof, and they have any dealings to ſettle, the righteous man is the perſon they wiſh to employ. In *buſineſs* of any kind, in which knavery may be practiſed, it is evident, the righteous man (unleſs under ſome diſqualification) is the man to be employed. The greateſt knave would think the religion of his merchant, or his attorney, a great ſecurity to him. Perhaps, indeed, the knave, judging by himſelf, will conſider the appearance of religion as hypocriſy. But this brings no diſcredit on the righteous man; becauſe if the knave had *really believed* him righteous, he *would* have employed him.

It is not however in buſineſs only, in which the righteous man is more excellent than his neighbour. Religion throws a glory round every character. The religious ſoldier, for inſtance, is a character in high eſteem. Religion interferes with none of the duties of his profeſſion, but gives a poliſh to them all. The good centurion Cornelius *, we have no reaſon to doubt, was as good

* Acts, x. 1.

an

an officer as any in the *Italian band.*—How exemplary a part does the naval commander exhibit, who diſcourages vice in his ſhip, by his own example—the vice of ſwearing particularly, which is ſo prevalent; and inforces on his crew, as far as he can, all thoſe duties of religion, which his country enjoins.—The country gentleman too will always meet with high eſteem, who, inſtead of a life of diſſipation and attachment to his pleaſures, ſpreads the example of a religious and uſeful life among his tenants and dependents.

As for the clergyman, he is out of the queſtion. If he be an irreligious man, he is of all characters the moſt deteſtable.

XXIX.

1 TIM. vi. 6.

GODLINESS, WITH CONTENTMENT, IS GREAT GAIN.

WE have here the whole ſum of human happineſs both here and hereafter, comprized in two words.

Contentment draws in all our unruly deſires, which are the great diſturbers of life—it makes us ſatisfied with what we have, which riches alone cannot do—it roots out envy, anxious care, competitions, and other invaders of our quiet; and, in ſhort, ſets us at reſt with the world.—When *godlineſs* is added to *contentment*, *the ladder reaches from earth to heaven.* Our affections are purified, and our thoughts are expanded with the hopes of a bleſſed immortality.—The reſult of this union between *godlineſs* and *contentment* is certainly great gain. What can be more? It is the gain both of heaven and earth.

XXX.

LUKE, viii. 18.

TAKE HEED HOW YOU HEAR.

THE ſcriptures are the great ſource of all our *religious knowledge*. They are alſo the great ſource of all our *religious errors*. We are cautioned therefore *to take care how we hear*, or how we *read*, as we find we may imbibe *error*, as well as *truth*. In ſhort, the difficulties of ſcripture ſeem to be among the means of a ſtate of trial, and, like the other means of a ſtate of trial, ſhould continually exerciſe our diligence, integrity, and care.

Now the moſt probable means of reading the ſcripture with advantage is, conſtantly to attend to the *general ſcope* of it—not to *particular paſſages*. It is an attention chiefly to *particular paſſages*,

which gives occaſion to moſt of the errors that men have fallen into.

In order, therefore, to have ſuch a fund of ſcriptural knowledge, as may enable us to collect the *general ſenſe* of ſcripture on every occaſion, we ſhould read it over and over, and make it ſo familiar to us, that when any doctrine is touched, the *general ſcope of ſcripture*, on that ſubject, may riſe at once to our memory.——The primary uſe of reading ſcripture, no doubt, is to improve our hearts by the precepts it enjoins. It is, however, of great uſe to read it, in the manner here recommended, with a view to obtain a general knowledge of the contents of it.

Thus, for inſtance, the doctrine of *predeſtination* reſts on a few texts, ſcattered about in different parts. Theſe texts are capable of eaſy interpretation when conſidered apart.—But the grand anſwer to this miſchievous doctrine does not ſo much lie in explaining texts, as in oppoſing to it the *general ſenſe of ſcripture*. We find every where exhortations to purity and holineſs, which are abſurd, if every man's fate is already determined.

The ſame mode of anſwer may be given to thoſe who conſider faith, and other evangelical doctrines,

doctrines as *ends*, rather than as *means*. The general ſcope of the goſpel ſhews us, that all its doctrines are intended to lead us to that ſtate of purity from which our firſt parents fell. On that great event Chriſtianity, was introduced. *As in Adam all die, ſo in Chriſt all ſhall be made alive.* They muſt be reſtored to that purity of heart and life, which alone can make them acceptable in the ſight of God. Hence therefore we ſhould liſten with *caution* to ſuch doctrines, as lay the *ſtreſs* of religion on any thing but a *holy life*, through faith in Chriſt.—If Chriſtians would keep this point conſtantly in view, and lead holy lives in conformity to it, they might vary, and perhaps err, in matters of leſs moment, but could never fall into any fundamental errors.

XXXI.

MARK vi. 12.

THEY WENT OUT, AND PREACHED THAT MEN SHOULD REPENT.

A PASSAGE, which I think rather exceptionable in an excellent book, (and therefore the more exceptionable,) gave occaſion to the following remarks. *Holineſs*, ſays this pious writer, *does not precede a man's reconciliation to God, and is its cauſe; but follows it, and is its effect* *. This ſeems to be ſaying, in other words, that God will be reconciled to *unrepenting* ſinners. If not, holineſs muſt precede reconciliation.

The whole tenor of ſcripture, from one end to the other, is an exhortation to repentance.—But,

* Mr. Wilberforce on the Chriſtian Religion, p. 328. ſecond edition.

ſays

ſays the ſinner, (reaſoning on the poſition above quoted,) it can have no effect. My liſtening to the exhortations of ſcripture can avail nothing in reconciling me to God. I am ſtill an impenitent ſinner, till after my reconciliation. Your exhortations therefore to repentance, and the exhortations of ſcripture, have no force with me. *I* muſt wait *God's time.*

I own, I know not what anſwer could be given to the retort of ſuch a ſinner. Indeed, as far as I can ſee, this doctrine rather urges againſt the neceſſity even of a Saviour's atonement: for if we have no merit of *any kind*, I ſee not how we can have any demerit. God does every thing. We do nothing.

What appears to me the truth on this ſubject is, that God gives all mankind opportunities of repentance, fitted to their ſeveral ſtations; and theſe opportunities we may either cloſe with, or reject: we have our option. He who cloſes with them, draws the grace of God upon his endeavours, by fervent prayer. And he who does not, muſt take the conſequence. The two thieves upon the croſs had each the ſame opportunity: and he who accepted it was ſaved.

Of

Of the nature of motives, through which one chuſes, and another rejects, we know nothing. But of this we may be aſſured, that if God means any thing by ſtiling himſelf *no reſpecter of perſons*, he gives an option to every man. The difficulties of the queſtion let us leave with God, and ſatisfy ourſelves with the plain ſcripture-doctrine of *working out our own ſalvation*, and depending on the merits of Chriſt, in making what we do acceptable to God.

XXXII.

ACTS, XV. 9.

PURIFY THEIR HEARTS BY FAITH.

THE apoſtle is here ſpeaking of the converſion of the Gentiles, whoſe hearts, he ſays were *purified by faith.*

Now the hearts of converts were *purified by faith* in two ways.

In the firſt place, when the convert renouncing his idolatry, and other ſins, profeſſed his faith in Chriſt, and his reſolution to lead a Chriſtian life, we are aſſured, in various inſtances, that his heart was *purified by faith* :—his paſt ſins were forgiven —and he was placed in a ſtate of innocence.

Thus far his faith acted with a kind of *atoning power*, under the authority of the great author of our redemption. But it was afterwards expected, that his heart ſhould be purified by *faith*, acting as

a mean to lead him into that purity of life, which he had *profeſſed*. His *firſt purification by faith*, ſignified nothing as to his *future life* without the *ſecond*. If indeed he had died immediately after his *firſt purification by faith*, before he had committed ſin, he would have been ſaved. But if he lived afterwards, he was obliged to ſecure his ſalvation by a holy life.

The thief upon the croſs ſeems to have been an inſtance of the former mode of *purification by faith*. On his firſt conviction, he received abſolution, and dying immediately after, he carried with him a bleſſed viaticum.

Simon Magus was an inſtance of the neceſſity of the *latter mode of purification*. His heart had received its firſt *purification by faith*, in conſequence of which, he had been baptized. But afterwards relapſing into his old depravity, the apoſtle, St. Peter, treats him with great ſeverity. After this relapſe, he could not be ſaved without repentance, and the purification of a holy life.

Some pious people ſeem to conceive, this firſt mode of purification by *faith*, as the general mode of its operation, ſuppoſing that *faith alone* is all that ſanctifies a Chriſtian, leaving good works to follow merely as a teſt of it.

XXXIII.

HEB. xiii. 5.

BE CONTENT WITH SUCH THINGS AS YE HAVE.

THE language of the world to its votaries on the ſubject of contentment, is ſomewhat in this ſtrain.

Your great end in life is to puſh forward, and make your fortunes. The precepts of religion are, in ſome things, too ſtrict for a trading country. Indeed, without a little allowance they cannot be obſerved. Keep however within the niceſt rules of what *the world calls honeſty*. Do nothing openly knaviſh—nothing contrary to the common practice of men of character. Theft, forgery, falſe evidence, are all abominable, and will deſervedly ruin your characters. At the ſame time, there are ſeveral things commonly practiſed in your profeſſion, which you muſt conform to. All fair traders

traders allow them, though among preciſe puritanical people they would not readily be admitted. In ſelling or buying, you muſt often praiſe and depreciate beyond the truth. You muſt, now and then, take advantage of ſome for the loſſes you may have ſuſtained by others. Trade might otherwiſe be a loſing bargain. It is fair alſo to ſpeculate, and, by monopolizing, to keep the price of ſome uſeful commodity in your own hands.—Or if any perſon oppoſe you in buſineſs, and ſtand between you and the accompliſhment of ſome favourite ſcheme, you may undermine him, and privately attack his character. It is ſelf-defence. He attacks you firſt.—With regard to mercantile and qualifying oaths, I know not what to ſay. I muſt leave you in thoſe matters to your own judgment. If by any caſuiſtry you can avoid the force of them, it is all I deſire. My great inſtruction, on the whole, is to raiſe yourſelves in life. Let that thought be always uppermoſt. Never be ſatisfied with what you have, but always look forward to ſomething more. You may *talk of contentment*, if you will, and of being ſatisfied with moderate things. You will make your way eaſier under ſuch declarations. Only take care never

to make ſuch ſentiments, the ſentiments of your hearts.

Thus the *world* ſpeaks on the ſubject of contentment: let us now hear what *Chriſtianity* ſays.

When I enjoin you to be *content with ſuch things as you have*, I mean to enjoin you literally to ſhut in all your deſires. I allow induſtry and frugality in your ſeveral employments; but I ſtrictly forbid you to be ſolicitous about the *event of things*. Leave that entirely in the hands of God. He may ordain you to lead a life of poverty. Bear it with reſignation, depending upon that God, who has declared he will never forſake *you*, if you never forſake *him*. Recollect alſo, that if you can be content in your low eſtate, contentment is real happineſs. On the other hand, it may pleaſe God to proſper your induſtry with great ſucceſs—or raiſe you, in other ways, to a ſtate of affluence. In theſe caſes, ſtill draw in your deſires. Your riches are not given you merely for yourſelves. Except juſt what a *conſcientious reſpect* to your ſtations in life may fairly require, your wealth is in fact, no more your own, than if you did not poſſeſs it. It engages you only in a more arduous employment. You are taught to conſider

yourſelf

yourſelf as a ſteward of God's bounty, for the good of others. Guard therefore againſt the temptations of riches, and make to yourſelf a *friend of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs*. This indeed ſhould check your deſire of riches; becauſe, if you conſider them in a true religious light, they only engage you in more arduous employment.—Draw in therefore all your deſires, and conſider yourſelf merely as a perſon travelling through a country, in which you have no property, to your great home, where, at length you will meet with every comfort.

If this be thought too ſtrict, let us hear St. Paul's opinion in the caſe.

"I have learned," ſays he, "in whatever ſtate I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abaſed, and how to abound. Every where, and in all things I am inſtructed, both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound and to ſuffer need."

Thus differently the World and Religion accoſt you on the ſubject of contentment, and you have an option to which you will liſten.—But obſerve one thing, (adds Religion) the advice of the World is calculated only for a *few years*—mine for *eternity*.

XXXIV.

I COR. xiii. 12.

NOW I KNOW IN PART, BUT THESE SHALL I KNOW, EVEN ALSO AS I AM KNOWN.

THE apoſtle is here drawing a compariſon between ſeveral circumſtances in this world and the next; and among other inſtances, mentions the imperfection of our knowledge here, and the enlargement of it hereafter.

I ſhall firſt *explain the text*, and then make a few *reflections* upon it.

The apoſtle ſays, *we know in part*—that is, our knowledge is very confined. It is indeed beſt characterized by negatives—not ſo much by what we know, as by what we do not know. The wiſeſt and moſt learned men have been the moſt ready to acknowledge their ignorance. In what branch of

know-

knowledge can any man ſay, he knows more than *in part?*—But the ignorance of man is ground ſo well known, that it is unneceſſary to run it over. I ſhall only obſerve, that as no exception is made, we may ſuppoſe this confined knowledge relates to religion as well as to ſcience. The great work of redemption in all its parts and extenſive range, (except thoſe parts which immediately relate to ourſelves) is moſt probably juſt as much hidden from us, as the nature of the heavenly bodies—the mode of vegetation—or of animal growth.

For our comfort, however, we are told, that although we now only *know in part*, yet hereafter *we ſhall know, even as alſo we are known.* Our faculties ſhall be enlarged, and opened into a knowledge of many things, of which we have now no conception.

Spirits hereafter may probably have the ſame diſpoſition for diverſity of purſuits, which is found on earth. Variety in the works of God is one of its principal characteriſtics.—Some may employ themſelves in tracing the various cauſes and chain of events in human affairs, which we call evil, and in acquainting themſelves with the reaſons of thoſe perplexing circumſtances in the government of the world,

world, in which the good man piouſly acquieſces, and which the bad man turns into arguments againſt Providence.—Others again may examine, what we are told, *angels deſire to look into*, the ſecrets of God's revelations to mankind—his early communications to the firſt race of men—the various peculiarities of the Jewiſh diſpenſation—and the ſtill greater wonders of the goſpel.—While ſome may examine the works of creation, and trace the amazing grandeur, contrivance, and beauty of every part, from the leaſt to the greateſt—from the reptile of the earth, to the orb of the ſun.—But in whatever way theſe glorified ſpirits purſue their various enquiries, they turn them all in the end into themes of gratitude and praiſe to the great Creator.

Let us now examine a few of ſuch *reflections*, as ariſe from the ſhort ſpan of human knowledge in this world, and its extenſive range in the next. The moſt uſeful of them perhaps are theſe.

In the firſt place, we exalt our ideas of a future ſtate. What can be conceived more grand, or more agreeable to the nature of the human ſoul, than to have all thoſe corporeal and earthly obſtacles

ſtacles removed, which are, in part, the ſources of its ignorance—to have all its faculties enlarged —at liberty to act freely—and to ſtray among all thoſe wonderful parts of knowledge, which will moſt probably be opened in a future world. To this may be added, the probability of our happy intercourſe with the beatified ſpirits of all ages, and all nations; communicating mutually the fruits of our ſeveral purſuits—and enjoying all that happineſs, of which rational reſearches and philoſophic eaſe give us but a faint idea in this world. The expreſſion of *ſeeing through a glaſs darkly, but then face to face*, is full of that grand obſcurity, which is in the higheſt degree ſublime; and raiſes of courſe the moſt exalted conceptions of our intercourſe with the divine Being in a future ſtate *.

Secondly,

* ——— How great
To mingle intereſts, converſe, amities,
With all the ſons of reaſon, ſcatter'd wide
Through habitable ſpace, wherever born,
Howe'er endowed! to live free citizens
Of univerſal nature!———
——— to riſe in ſcience, as in bliſs,
Initiate in the ſecrets of the ſkies:
To read creation, read its mighty plan
In the vaſt boſom of the Deity:

The

Secondly, we ought to think modeſtly of our earthly knowledge. As we have it from ſuch good authority, that we *know only in part*, we ſhould be ſo far from ſuppoſing that we know *every thing*, that we cannot ſuppoſe we thoroughly know *any thing*.—And if, in the more trivial branches of human ſcience, we can know only *in part*, in matters of the higheſt importance, we ſhould ſtill be more humble. In the redemption of the world by Chriſt, we muſt conceive that ſuch parts of it as *appertain to God*, muſt needs be above our comprehenſion.

Laſtly, as human knowledge is ſo confined, it is not really of that great conſequence which we are apt to make it. As the intellects and knowledge of children born into this world, are of the ſame ſize, ſo it may, perhaps, be in the next. There may be little or no difference between the knowledge of the philoſopher and of the peaſant.—

The plan and execution to collate:
To ſee before each glance of piercing thought,
All cloud, all ſhadow blown away, and leave
No myſtery ——— ———

YOUNG'S NIGHT, 6.

The

The great point therefore ſhould be to value *religion* more than *knowledge*. As our knowledge here is ſo very imperfect, and as religion leads to the full enlargement of it, a real thirſt after knowledge, will incline us to cultivate chiefly what in the end will tend moſt to the improvement of it.

XXXV.

I COR. iv. 4.

THE GOD OF THIS WORLD HATH BLINDED THE EYES OF THEM THAT BELIEVE NOT.

NATURE never produced an atheiſt. God Almighty left the heathen nations without excuſe for atheiſm, in giving them rain and fruitful ſeaſons, from which they might, at leaſt, have collected his being and government. And, in fact, we find that with whatever falſehoods the old heathen creeds were filled, there was very little atheiſm in any of them.

By analogy we reaſon, that when God gave man the revelation of the goſpel, he afforded every candid mind ſufficient evidence of its truth. And, indeed, we find, that every candid mind, every fair examiner, both when it was firſt preached, and

and ever ſince, hath been convinced of its truth.—When the mind is not candid, or the truth not fairly examined, infidelity ſprings from two ſources —the perverſion of our *paſſions*; and the perverſion of our *reaſon*. In other words, as the text expreſſes it, the *God of this world;* that is, ſome worldly motive, *hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not.*

The man of pleaſure has an intereſt to ſerve wholly oppoſite to the nature of the goſpel. The rules of the goſpel oppoſe every action of his life. It is natural for him, therefore, and the only thing indeed he can do, while he continues to be a man of pleaſure, to endeavour to overturn the goſpel. If he cannot overthrow the goſpel, the goſpel will certainly overthrow him.—But the man of pleaſure is by no means a formidable enemy. He cannot reaſon, and therefore he cannot injure the goſpel by argument. For the ſame reaſon, he is alſo unaſſailable. In deſperate caſes men often fight with ſuch weapons as come firſt at hand. With ſuch the man of pleaſure commonly attacks Chriſtianity. They are ordinary weapons indeed, but they are the beſt he can get. His arguments are made up of ſcraps of wit—obſolete objections, which have been anſwered over and

over

over—and of miſconceived and miſinterpreted paſſages of ſcripture, which have no force when explained, or when compared either with the context, or with the general ſcheme of Chriſtianity.—Poor, however, as his objections are, they ſuffice him, becauſe he neither chuſes to examine ſuch anſwers as would overturn them, nor to come in the way of ſuch evidence as would bear them down. In ſhort, it is his ſtudious endeavour, that the *God of this world* may *blind his eyes*. He is an infidel through choice.

The man of *reaſon* oppoſes Chriſtianity on other ground. Though he too, now and then, condeſcends to liſten to the calls of appetite, his grand attack is founded on the all-ſufficiency of reaſon. Reaſon is given him to be the touchſtone of right and wrong—of truth and falſehood. To this he brings all religious truth. And as objections may be made to every thing, his objections, if he be an acute man, may be ſubtle: though ſometimes they are trifling enough, as he never vouchſafes to look into thoſe writers, who have examined and diſſolved his objections, probably long before he made them.—But, what is moſt perverſe in his attack on Chriſtianity, he has different modes of judging between religious and ſcientific truth. In many

many parts of ſcience, he is obliged to confeſs his ignorance. But he has not that candour, when he meets with any thing difficult in religion. This we call unfair. He ſhould certainly acknowledge his own confined underſtanding in religion, as well as in other parts of knowledge—unleſs he think he can more eaſily graſp the difficulties of a divine revelation, than of a human ſcience.

The man of reaſon is under another bias, which leads him into infidelity. He often forms a ſyſtem of his own, which the pride of his heart will not ſuffer him to abandon. Or, perhaps, he is under the influence of ſome infidel ſociety, and has all their ſcorn to encounter, if he draw back. When he once, therefore, becomes an infidel, he generally continues one *.

* The Abbé Barruel has written a hiſtory of Jacobiniſm, from which it appears, that Voltaire, and all the French philoſophers were of this claſs. Their horrid watch-word was *Ecraſez l'infame*, (*cruſh the wretch*,) meaning Chriſt. And in their *blaſphemous ſyſtem*, as far as we know, they all died.

XXXVI.

2 CHRON. xxxii. 31.

HOWBEIT IN THE BUSINESS OF THE AMBASSADORS OF THE PRINCES OF BABYLON, WHO SENT UNTO HIM TO ENQUIRE OF THE WONDER THAT WAS DONE IN THE LAND, *GOD LEFT HIM TO TRY HIM.*

WE are to ſuppoſe the writer of this book to be inſpired, and the doctrine contained in the text to be ſcriptural; though I do not remember any where a parallel paſſage.

God had bleſſed the good king Hezekiah with more riches than any prince of his time; inſomuch, that he was the wonder of all thoſe nations which bordered on his dominions. Among others, the king of Babylon ſent meſſengers to congratulate him on his recovery from a dangerous illneſs; but, in fact, to examine into the truth of what he had heard

heard of his great opulence *. Hezekiah ſeems to have indulged the pride of his heart too much on this occaſion; and God to humble him, no doubt, *left him to himſelf.*

Now this probably may be one method of God's dealing with mankind, in a ſtate of trial. In ſome circumſtances, *he may leave even good men to themſelves*, to try and exerciſe their humility, by ſhewing them how faint their own endeavours are without *his* aſſiſtance. And although this doctrine is not found any where, that I recollect, except in this paſſage of ſcripture, yet it ſeems very agreeable to the nature of a ſtate of trial.—Many expreſſions there are in ſcripture, which ſpeak of the derelict-tion of God's holy ſpirit; that is, when bad men are hardened againſt it, and perſiſt in rejecting its gentle admonitions—but this does not amount to the doctrine of the text—Both doctrines, however, are excellent leſſons in a ſtate of trial. The former ſhould be an awful warning to lead the bad man to repentance: the latter ſhould be a ſtanding caution tothe good man, to keep his mind in that humble ſtate, which alone can make him acceptable to God.

* This appears from laying together the three ſeparate paſſages in which this tranſaction is mentioned, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. —Iſa. xxxix. 1.—2 Kings, xx. 12.

XXXVII.

HEB. ii. 10.

IT BECAME HIM, FOR WHOM ARE ALL THINGS, AND BY WHOM ARE ALL THINGS, IN BRINGING MANY SONS TO GLORY, TO MAKE THE CAPTAIN OF THEIR SALVATION PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS.

THIS paſſage ſeems to have been ſometimes miſunderſtood, as if the character of Jeſus Chriſt could be made more *perfect by ſufferings*. In the *words*, no doubt, there is ſome ambiguity, but none in the *ſenſe*.

The great dignity of Chriſt, as the ſon of God, is ſet forth in the beginning of the chapter in the ſtrongeſt manner. The world is put in ſubjection to him; he is crowned with glory and honour, and ſet over all the works of God. Such a being, therefore, had no need *to be made perfect through ſufferings*.

It

It is evident, the apoſtle, therefore, ſpeaks of our Saviour in the paſſage before us, merely as the *redeemer of mankind.* In the firſt light, Chriſt wanted nothing to perfect his nature. It was in the ſecond light only—that of being *the captain of our ſalvation*, that he needed to be made *perfect through ſuffering*—particularly the ſuffering of death; as it was *neceſſary* in this great work, that he *ſhould taſte of death for every man.*

XXXVIII.

MATT. V. 17.

THINK NOT I AM COME TO DESTROY THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS; I AM NOT COME TO DESTROY, BUT TO FULFIL.

THIS expreſſion of our bleſſed Saviour contains the whole connection of the Old and New Teſtament.

The ſubject may be diſcuſſed, by conſidering, *firſt*, in what the law differed from the goſpel—and, *ſecondly*, how the former was fulfilled by the latter.

The law may be explained as an inſtitution requiring perfect obedience, and threatening judgment on every tranſgreſſion; at the ſame time, accepting in mercy, certain ſacrifical atonements.

The

The goſpel, on the other hand, with the mildneſs of a kind indulgent father, ſpeaks in a gentler language; and ſhews us, that the law was only a preparatory inſtitution to a full and complete revelation of God's will.

We may examine, ſecondly, in what way it is thus preparatory; or how the law was fulfilled by the goſpel.—In the firſt place, our Saviour refined the *morality* of the Jewiſh law. Many roughneſſes, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, deformed it. The Jews were a ſtiff-necked race; and our Saviour mentions ſeveral things, particularly the latitude between the ſexes, which was ſuffered by Moſes only for the *hardneſs of their hearts*. And St. Paul tells us, God *winked at them* in thoſe early days. —All theſe things the goſpel-morality refined, and ſeated religion where it ought to be ſeated, in a purified heart.

The next point, in which our bleſſed Lord fulfilled the Jewiſh conſtitution, was in the completion of thoſe prophecies which related to the Meſſiah. Theſe prophecies are among the moſt remarkable parts of the Bible, and having been authenticated by the completion of many occaſional and temporary prophecies, relating merely to the captivities, and other events among the Jews themſelves, they pre-

ſerved the hopes of the Meſſiah, till he himſelf appeared. Afterwards the completion of thoſe prophecies which related to Chriſt, confirmed the faith of all ſuch as were ſeriouſly and honeſtly diſpoſed.

Jeſus, laſtly, fulfilled the law and the prophets, by fulfilling the ceremonies of the Jewiſh ritual. The myſterious meaning of the various ſacrifices, and other parts of it, were probably hidden from many of the Jews themſelves. They were a ſort of dead carcaſe, till the coming of Chriſt put life, as it were, into them; and ſhewed plainly, they were all intended to figure out the great ſacrifice and atonement, which he made for the ſins of mankind.

XXXIX.

I JOHN, iv. 1.

TRY THE SPIRITS WHETHER THEY BE OF GOD.

SOME of the beſt clergymen of our church, I fear, are called methodiſts, merely becauſe they are in a peculiar manner ſerious and attentive to their duty. Some opinions, however, are held by people under this denomination, which ſeem to be unſcriptural and miſleading: and theſe opinions alone are what I ſhould wiſh to combat.

Of theſe, the firſt is *predeſtination*, which, though receiving a colour from a few inſulated texts of ſcripture, is totally diſcredited by a candid review of the whole. Nothing can be more abſurd, than the revelation of the goſpel, if the fates of all people are already determined.

Another miſleading tenet held by ſome of this perſuaſion, is that of *aſſurance*, as they call it. They ſuppoſe they may arrive at ſuch a ſinleſs ſtate, as may *aſſure* them of ſalvation. This doctrine is diſcredited by the very nature of a ſtate of trial; and by the whole tenor of ſcripture, which exhorts us every where to care and watchfulneſs, and *to work out our own ſalvation with fear and trembling* *.

Pretences to ſudden *illuminations, and illapſes of of the ſpirit*, ſeem alſo to be very *unſcriptural* and *miſchievous*. They are *unſcriptural*, becauſe the few texts they depend on, may be much more naturally interpreted in another ſenſe. Nor have they the leaſt countenance from the general tenor of ſcripture.—They are *miſchievous* alſo, becauſe they have often led people to do very unwarrantable things, under the pretence, or perhaps under the perſuaſion, of being guided by the ſpirit.

The doctrine of faith ſeems often to be carried too far. It is too much perhaps ſeparated from works, when works are left to follow, merely as *teſts of faith*. If faith be well eſtabliſhed, works will follow without queſtion; yet by throwing an apparent

* See Hint xxi.

ſlight

ſlight on works in compariſon with faith, a mode of preaching is adopted different from the uſual mode of ſcripture, in which good works are at leaſt as much inſiſted on as faith. A door alſo, I ſhould fear, is opened to ſelf-deceit among lower people; as it is a much eaſier matter for a man to perſuade himſelf he has faith, than to practiſe the duties of a Chriſtian life.

Some people throw a ſtill greater ſlight on good works, by applying, as they ſay, the merits of Chriſt to themſelves by an act of faith, which they conſider as the grand doctrine of Chriſtianity *.

We are ſorry alſo occaſionally to find among the ſtrict profeſſors of this ſect an uncharitable temper. Many good men are addicted to *this*

* Biſhop Burnet, ſpeaking of the ſectaries of his day, tells us, "the independents were raiſing the old Antinomian tenets, "as if men, by believing Chriſt, were ſo united in him, that "his righteouſneſs became theirs, without any other condition "beſides their faith; ſo that, though they acknowledged the "obedience to his laws neceſſary, they did not call it a condi-"tion, but only a conſequence of juſtification. In this they "were oppoſed by moſt of the preſbyterians, who ſeemed to "be ſenſible, that this ſtruck at the root of all religion, as it "weakened the obligation to a holy life."

BURNET'S *Hiſt. of his own Times*, vol. ii. p. 247.

zeal,

zeal, for I ſhould gladly derive it from *that ſource*. They make their own definitions of faith, and other virtues; and, if you do not receive them in their way, you are no Chriſtian. But this uncharitable opinion reſts only among the moſt bigotted of this perſuaſion.

I ſhould alſo tax the itinerant and unauthorized preacher of this ſect, and the conventicle in which he preaches, but I am doubtful, however fanatical he may be, whether his fanaticiſm may not work on ignorant people, and rouſe their conſciences to a ſenſe of guilt more forcibly than the inſtructions of a better divine.—Beſides, they often avail themſelves of ſuch places as are very diſtant from churches; and, it is ſurely better to hear Chriſt preached in a conventicle, than no where at all.

XL.

PSALM lvi. 3.

NEVERTHELESS THOUGH I AM SOMETIMES AFRAID, YET PUT I MY TRUST IN THEE.

THIS whole pſalm is a beautiful and natural picture of the conflict in the mind of a good man, between the fears of the world, and a truſt in Providence.

The Pſalmiſt begins with a lamentable complaint of the diſtreſſes he underwent from the violence of his enemies. *Be merciful unto me, O God, for man goeth about to devour me. He is daily fighting and troubling me.*

Then a gleam of hope, and truſt in God ariſing in his heart, yet ſtill accompanied with a degree of fear, he cries out, *Nevertheleſs, though I am*

I am ſometimes afraid, yet put I my truſt in thee.

In the next verſe, his hope and truſt ariſe ſtill higher: *I will praiſe God, becauſe of his word. I have put my truſt in God, and will not fear what fleſh can do unto me.*

But in the following verſes, his fears again preponderate. *Mine enemies daily miſtake my words. All they imagine is to do me evil. They hold altogether, and keep themſelves cloſe. They mark my ſteps, and lay wait for my ſoul.*

In the ſeventh verſe, he looks up again to heaven, and hopes that God would protect his innocence, and baffle the deſigns of his enemies.

One devout thought introduces another. At the ninth verſe, he feels conſcious that God has heard his petitions: *Whenſoever I call upon thee, mine enemies ſhall be put to flight. This I know, for God is on my ſide.*

This raiſes in him a joyful hope: *In God's word will I rejoice: his word will comfort me.*

Rouſed by theſe holy ſentiments, he baniſhes at length all his fears—truſts fully in God; and in this holy hope he ends the pſalm. *In God have I put my truſt: I will not be afraid what man can do*

do unto me. Unto thee O God, will I pay my vows: unto thee will I give thanks. Thou haſt delivered my ſoul from death, and I will walk before thee in the light of the living.

A good man may make many pleaſing reflections on the various feelings of this pſalm, which might be pointed out in a diſcourſe.

XLI.

GAL. i. 1.

JESUS CHRIST, WHOM GOD THE FATHER RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

JOHN, x. 18.

I HAVE POWER TO LAY DOWN MY LIFE, AND I HAVE POWER TO TAKE IT UP.

IN theſe paſſages, and in others of the ſame kind, there is a variation in the accounts given us of the reſurrection of Chriſt. In ſome paſſages he is repreſented as raiſed *by God;* in others, as *raiſing himſelf.*

We reconcile this variation, as we do others, in which there is the appearance of the ſame contradiction, by conſidering the divine Emanuel as *he is always repreſented in ſcripture*, under the two natures of divine and human. When *God is ſaid to raiſe him*, his *human* nature is conſidered, and his *divine* nature, when he is repreſented as raiſing himſelf.

XLII.

PSALM IV. 5.

OFFER THE SACRIFICE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND PUT THY TRUST IN THE LORD.

THIS is a Jewiſh precept, but may be as well addreſſed to a Chriſtian.

The Jew is directed to offer the ſacrifice of a holy life, but not to put his truſt in his own righteouſneſs: he muſt put his truſt only in the mercies of God.

The Chriſtian alſo is directed to offer to God the ſacrifice of a holy life. But he muſt not put his truſt in them. He cannot indeed be ſaved without it; but he muſt *truſt only in the merits of Chriſt.*

Such is the ſimilitude between Judaiſm, the ancient ſtock, and Chriſtianity, which was ingrafted upon it.

XLIII.

1 PET. iii. 8.

BE YE ALL OF ONE MIND, HAVING COMPASSION ONE OF ANOTHER.

THAT we ſhould all be of *one opinion*, is impoſſible, and therefore the apoſtle could not mean *opinion* by the word *mind*. The apoſtle's rule, however, is ſtill obſerved, if the difference in our *opinions* does not appear *in our behaviour*. No difference of opinion ſhould occaſion a breach of charity. This is all that religion ſeems to require; and on this principle, that as we all may have our errors, we ſhould treat what we ſuppoſe the errors of others with compaſſion; ſo that, although we cannot all be of *one mind in opinion*, we ſhould all be of one mind *in having compaſſion one on another*.

XLIV.

PSALM ix. 18.

THE POOR SHALL NOT ALWAY BE FORGOTTEN: THE PATIENT ABIDING OF THE MEEK SHALL NOT PERISH FOR EVER.

BY the *poor* are not meant thoſe merely in indigent circumſtances; but ſuch as bear indigence with religious reſignation. To them the goſpel (for David's remark is purely evangelical,) thus ſpeaks: "Though, ye patient ſufferers, ye "appear to be thus forſaken, depend upon it, "your gracious Father has you in his eye. He "afflicts you no farther than is neceſſary. Envy "not thoſe whom you ſee, in appearance, happier than yourſelves. Be reſigned, and receive "with piety all the diſpenſations of your heavenly "Father, and your time of alleviation will cer-

" tainly come. That merciful God, whom you " ſerve, will not ſuffer the *patient abiding of the* " *meek to periſh for ever.*"

N. B. Some ſuch encouragement as this might be detailed from this text, under two or three uſeful heads.

XLV.

ISAIAH xi. 9.

THE EARTH SHALL BE FULL OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD, AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA.

THIS is an ancient prophecy among many others, denoting the univerſality of the Chriſtian religion; and in the New Teſtament we have various correſponding paſſages, in which the progreſs of Chriſtianity, from one end of the earth to the other, is held out.

But, ſays the objector, we do not ſee theſe prophecies and intimations realized. Great part of the world is now in a heathen ſtate—great part of it receives the koran—and ſeveral countries of the eaſt have a religion of their own.

We anſwer, that we conceive the prophecies are fulfilled, when all parts of the world ſhall have

had the offer of Chriſtianity; but, by no means, that it ſhall be upheld among them *by a miracle*. That is contrary to the whole analogy of nature. God gives increaſe to the tree, but does not prevent its decay. He gives increaſe to a man, but does not prevent his growing infirm. Thus religion, when planted in a country, is left to the natural courſe of things; and if that country grow ſupine, and does not cheriſh the bleſſing, it muſt take on itſelf the conſequence. We conceive, therefore, that with regard to all thoſe countries which receive the koran, where the goſpel once flouriſhed, the prophecy hath already been fulfilled. Great part of Germany, France, and Italy, may be in the ſame ſtate of dereliction. They *have had* the goſpel, and if they ſhould nationally expel it, as in France they ſeem to have done, it is their own fault: the prophecy has been fulfilled.

As to thoſe countries which never have received the goſpel—great part of America, Aſia, and Africa, we have no doubt but it will be offered to them all. We ſee Chriſtianity has made great ſtrides in thoſe countries, even in our own times, and given us a ſufficient earneſt that the prophecy will be fulfilled in every one of them.

The

The revelations of St. John indeed ſeem to open glorious ſcenes; when, in ſome future period, the goſpel ſhall ſhine out in all its glory. But from theſe we can merely form conjectures, and catch only glimpſes of the future ſplendour of religion.—But here too we ſeem to have prophecies, denoting in the *removal of the candleſticks*, that religion may deſert a country which it once bleſſed.

In the mean time, let us, my brethren, look to ourſelves. If we value religion, let us take care to preſerve it. It is worth our care, were it only for the ſake of this world. In it is involved our civil, as well as future happineſs. But it is not a bleſſing entailed upon us. It may, we ſee, be loſt, and we may be left in ſuch miſerable darkneſs, as at this time overſpreads the Turkiſh empire.

XLVI.

I COR. XV. 22.

IN ADAM ALL DIE.

AS God created man in a ſtate of perfection, it has been aſked, Why he did not allow him to continue in it? The abruptneſs of a paradiſaical ſtate looks like (what we cannot conceive) a ſort of haſty change in the counſels of the Almighty. We muſt either, therefore, anſwer this objection, we are told; or muſt give up the Moſaic account as a mere allegorical compoſition.

Of the abruptneſs of a paradiſaical ſtate, (on which the objection is founded,) we can form no opinion, unleſs we were perfectly acquainted with the whole of God Almighty's plan in the redemption of the world by Chriſt. It may relate to other worlds as well as to ours. We ſee a *natural* connection

nection between our world, and the ſun, the moon, and (for any thing we know) the planets and ſtars. Why may there not then be a *moral* connection alſo? As far as we can trace God Almighty's works, there is a connection *among them all.* In this view then, the fall of man may be conſidered only as a part of ſome vaſt plan—perhaps only as the opening of it. This diſſolves the objection ſo far, at leaſt, as to drive the objector to take refuge in his own ignorance.

Another probable ſuppoſition is, that as the world is meant to be a *ſtate of trial*, the hiſtory of the fall was a good introduction to it. It was like a table of contents at the beginning of a book. It ſhewed at once the fatal conſequences of miſcarriage in a ſtate of trial, and tended to put men on their guard.—Something of the ſame kind our bleſſed Saviour thought proper to preſent to mankind, on the opening of the goſpel. As the world was then more advanced, and become a wider ſcene of trial, our Saviour, in his temptation in the wilderneſs, gave his followers a view of thoſe temptations they were afterwards to encounter, and of the proper mode of oppoſing them by the truths of ſcripture.

But

But whatever were the Almighty's reaſons, (which it behoves not us to ſcrutinize too deeply,) for opening the world with the fall of man, whom he had juſt created; of this we may be aſſured, that as far as Adam himſelf was concerned, his will was as free as ours. At the ſame time, God made uſe of him as an inſtrument, as he does of all his creatures, bad and good, in forwarding his own deſigns.

XLVII.

LUKE, x. 26.

WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE LAW? HOW READEST THOU?

THESE two queſtions our Saviour propoſed as an anſwer to a curious inquirer, who had the means, he thought, of anſwering himſelf. They were propoſed to a Jew; but are equally adapted to a Chriſtian. *What is written in the goſpel? How readeſt thou?*—Both queſtions require a very ſerious conſideration.

We are firſt aſked, *What is written in the goſpel?* Though the goſpel contains all our hopes of eternal life, and inſtructs us in all the means of obtaining it; there are numbers who never look into it, nor have the leaſt knowledge of what is written in it.—Numbers again, though they may caſually look into it, or hear it read in churches,

rarely make it the ſubject of their thoughts. If they ſhould be aſked, *What is written in the goſpel?* What are you to believe?—What are you to practiſe?—What proviſion does it make for ſinners?—What aſſiſtance does it offer? They have nothing to anſwer: they know little of its contents.

The ſecond queſtion, *How readeſt thou?* may be propoſed to thoſe, who do indeed read the ſcriptures—but in an improper manner. They read them careleſsly perhaps, and merely as a taſk—or with the prejudices of ſome ſect about them—or to ſeek objections—or to find arguments to enforce a favourite tenet—or, perhaps, under ſome ambiguous text to get a licence to ſin.

All theſe modes of reading ſcripture turn religion into miſchief.—An honeſt man ſees his path plainly before him. He knows that by reading the ſcriptures, he muſt *firſt learn his duty;* and that when he has learned his duty, *his only buſineſs is to practiſe it.*

XLVIII.

JAMES, i. 26.

IF ANY MAN AMONG YOU SEEM TO BE RELIGIOUS, AND BRIDLETH NOT HIS TONGUE, THAT MAN'S RELIGION IS VAIN.

THE ſcripture propoſes various *teſts* of religion. Charity is a teſt; the forgiveneſs of injuries alſo, and many other virtues and duties, may be called *teſts*; that is, if a man poſſeſs any of them in a Chriſtian manner, it may well be preſumed, he poſſeſſes others alſo.

In this light St. James, in the text, makes *bridling the tongue* a teſt of religion. How properly it may be called ſo, may appear from running over the effects of a *bridled* and an *unbridled* tongue.

The *unbridled* tongue ſhews itſelf in deceit, tricking, blaſphemy, ſwearing, and lying. In a neighbour-

neighbourhood it is a firebrand.—It defames, and inflames. Spiteful ſpeeches, detraction, and malice, are venomous ſhafts, which it ſhoots in all directions. Where intereſt is concerned, it can flatter as well as defame. In ſtate matters, it whiſpers treaſon. In matters of religion, it can be loud in the cauſe of infidelity.—An unbridled tongue, therefore, is the great ſource of wickedneſs; and, of courſe, when a man pretends to religion, without bridling his tongue, *his religion is vain.*—It may be added, that the unbridled tongue is the great bane of converſation and ſocial intercourſe. When it is moſt innocent, it often abounds with nonſenſe and folly—repeating things over and over, and fatiguing every body with tedious details of unimportant circumſtances.

On the other hand, *the bridled tongue* is one of the choice inſtruments of religion and ſocial happineſs. It is never ſo much in its proper office, as when engaged in the duties of religion—in praiſe, thankſgiving, petition, and confeſſion, to the great Creator.—The bridled tongue is the inſtrument alſo of kindneſs to man. It comforts the afflicted—it encourages the diffident—it adviſes and inſtructs the ignorant. It ſpeaks always the language of mildneſs and affection. It praiſes, but never

never inflames; and even when harſhneſs is neceſſary, it ſoftens the reproof by gentle expreſſions. —In the common intercourſe of converſation, it never talks at random; and treats ſuch ſubjects only, as are pleaſing to others. Every ſyllable it utters, except when it indulges acknowledged jocularity, is truth. If it expreſs friendſhip, it feels it. If it offer to ſerve you, you may aſſure yourſelf the offer is ſincere. In ſhort, a bridled tongue is generally connected with a good heart.

XLIX.

PSALM XIX. PART IV. 1.

MY SOUL CLEAVETH TO THE DUST: O QUICKEN ME ACCORDING TO THY WORD.

IN the Jewiſh prophets we often find a mode of ſentiment and expreſſion purely evangelical. In David, this is particularly conſpicuous. We have here as ſtrong a picture of a ſtate of nature and of grace, as an apoſtle could have given.

My ſoul cleaveth to the duſt. The cares, the vanities, and pleaſures of life, draw me to the world. I am not only drawn—I cleave to it. This world and I are become, as it were, one ſubſtance. I am dead to all other concerns.

Nothing but the grace of God can aſſiſt me. O, *quicken me according to thy word.* Thou haſt promiſed to aſſiſt thoſe who deſire thy aid. O, my God, let my ſincere endeavours claim that gracious promiſe. *Quicken me, quicken me, according to thy word.*

L.

HEB. xii. 21.

——COME TO MOUNT SION—TO THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM—TO AN INNUMERABLE COMPANY OF ANGELS—TO THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT.

WE are here invited to meet a very illuſtrious aſſembly—the wiſe and good, who have lived in all ages of the world. Theſe holy perſons having depoſited all thoſe imperfections, to which, as human beings, they once had been ſubject, are now in a ſtate of angelic happineſs; and receive with joy, all thoſe who have paſſed religiouſly through their ſtate of trial upon earth *. The inhabitants of all countries unite. Their modes of

* Luke, xix. 7.

communication, no doubt, ſuperſede the uſe of human language. The language of heaven is univerſal. What infinite gratification will it be to meet, on equal terms, all the great characters which have been admired in the world, in ancient and modern times?

But as only the good can mix in this glorious aſſembly, it may be one, among our many incentives to holineſs, to conſider how far we may be qualified to unite with them. Both reaſon and ſcripture aſſure us, that we ſhall carry with us the ſame frame of mind, with which we leave this world, into the next. Learning and abilities are not the leading parts of a heavenly character. Our worldly knowledge, we have it on record, *ſhall vaniſh away*. A holy life alone, through the mercy of God in Chriſt, is what we have to depend on. This only will procure us admittance to this illuſtrious aſſembly, where all thoſe diſtinctions will be loſt, which render human ſocieties formal and unpleaſant; and all thoſe topics advanced, which are moſt intereſting and delightful. Different degrees of ſuperiority, it is probable from analogy, a heavenly ſtate will exhibit, yet ſtill all thoſe repelling circumſtances we may believe

lieve will be removed, which on earth make so great a chasm between high and low.

If we may descend to particulars, we all have some virtuous friends, whom we value. How joyous will it be to meet them again in full felicity after all their toilsome trials on earth! On the other hand, how dreadful the thought of being secluded from them for ever!

LV.

PSALM lxii. 10.

IF RICHES INCREASE, SET NOT YOUR HEART UPON THEM.

AT firſt ſight, this might be thought an unneceſſary caution. If riches increaſe, one ſhould ſuppoſe there were leſs occaſion for that care and anxiety, which imply ſetting our hearts upon them. But the rule is accurately formed on a knowledge of human nature. An *addition* of more commonly generates a *deſire* of more; as when a man has gotten a habit of drinking, thirſt always creates thirſt.—In conformity to this natural pravity of the human mind, our Saviour framed the parable of the rich man, who pulled down his barns to build larger. As his riches increaſed,

his deſires, and his ſtore-houſes increaſed with them.

The obvious concluſion is, that the more it pleaſes God to bleſs us with abundance, the more we ſhould guard againſt this vicious propenſity; and inſtead of increaſing our deſires to get more wealth, we ſhould increaſe our endeavours to be of more uſe.

LII.

ROM. i. 20.

THE INVISIBLE THINGS OF HIM FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD ARE CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD BY THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE.

THIS world may be conſidered in many grand and inſtructive lights. The moſt obvious idea it preſents, is that of *a ſtate of trial*, in which they who are deſirous of improvement, are diſciplined as in a ſchool, with good and evil, as the means of correcting their faults, and preparing them for a better life.

This world may likewiſe be conſidered as a *natural proof of a better*. From the inequality of reward and puniſhment, which we obſerve here, we may well ſuppoſe, a juſt God will rectify all this inequality hereafter.

But

But at preſent, I mean to conſider the world in neither of theſe lights, but to hold it out merely as a kind of exhibition of the *nature of a future world.* Of this, it is true, it gives us but a dim reflected image; but yet enough to engage our admiration, and ſtimulate both our hopes and fears. *The inviſible things of God,* the text tells us, *are clearly ſeen by the things that are made*—that is, we may clearly make out the analogy between them.

In the various modes of animal enjoyment here, we ſee enough to convince us of the inclination our great Creator has to promote our happineſs hereafter.—On the other hand, we ſee enough of evil, to convince us, that as miſery as well as happineſs, is held out in this world, it may naturally be expected in the next.

We ſee farther various inſtances of beauty and deformity, both in the animal and vegetable world. We are led therefore to conceive highly of the beauty of angelic forms; while, on the other hand, the various degrees of deformity, furniſh us with conceptions of the great power of an Almighty hand, in giving wickedneſs hereafter thoſe hideous appearances which may beſt ſuit its nature.

Laſtly, though the beſt of men have much ground for unhappineſs, when they conſider their inability to act up to their known duty; yet ſometimes ſuch heart-felt joy—ſuch bright rays of hope ſpread over their minds; that if their depreſſions are the ſenſations of future miſery, their happier moments give them a fore-taſte of future happineſs.

Thus, God hath given us various emblems in this world, of what we may expect in the next. They are leſſons, which certainly have uſeful morals. The world is full of analogies; and analogy is one of the beſt comments on the works of God.

LIII.

LUKE, xiv. 11.

HE THAT HUMBLETH HIMSELF SHALL BE EXALTED.

OF courſe, he that exalteth himſelf ſhall be humbled. Indeed, if this rule were only a precept of worldly prudence, it would be highly uſeful. He who exalts himſelf, is ſure to loſe his end. People like to abaſe pride and ſelf-ſufficiency. When the ſoldier trumpets his own gallant actions, he may probably meet ridicule, when he expects praiſe: or when a man boaſts of his generoſity, he ſets his own value upon it, and nobody will be diſpoſed to bid over him.

But though ſelf-exaltation in a worldly ſenſe is very diſguſting, yet when it appears in religion, it deſtroys the very eſſence of all religious duty. The true

true Chriſtian temper conſiſts in a humble mortified ſenſe of ourſelves; and in a full reliance on the grace of God for aſſiſtance, and the merits of Chriſt for pardon. Humility is indeed the grand point of Chriſtian ethics. On no ſubject does our bleſſed Saviour dilate more: and indeed his whole life was only one great comment on his inſtructions. A life humbled to the laſt degree on earth, preceded his exaltation in heaven. The amazing condeſcenſion of the example, certainly ſhews the great importance of the precept.

LIV.

THIRD COMMANDMENT—EXOD. XX. 7.

THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN, FOR THE LORD WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTLESS THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN VAIN.

THIS awful commandment has a wider extent than many people are inclined to give it. Swearing, curſing, blaſphemy, and perjury, are out of the queſtion. Nobody can pretend to the name of a Chriſtian, who does not hold in abhorrence theſe deterring modes of taking *God's name in vain.*

But many who would wiſh to be thought good people, allow themſelves, without ſcruple, to invoke their maker's name on various trifling occaſions. On ſome little ſurprize, they will cry out, Good God! or Gracious God! or if they make any little

little requeſt, they will ſupplicate for God's ſake; or if they would ſhew reluctance to any trifle, they will cry out, God forbid! Or if they make any aſſeveration, they will uſher it in, by telling you, God knows it.

Now any of theſe modes of exclamation, if uttered on a ſolemn occaſion, may be conſidered as an act of devotion. On hearing of the ſudden death of a friend, if you cry *Good God!* you may mean it as a ſort of prayer: Thou, O God, art good; and I ſubmit, with pious reſignation, to all thy appointments. But if you make the ſame exclamation, when you meet your friend ſuddenly, the idea is entirely changed.

Upon all trifling occaſions therefore, it is calling God to be a witneſs of your mirth—your joy—or your ſurprize—which is ſurely taking his name in vain. It is treating that ſacred name with irreverence—it is leſſening that reſpect that is due to it—and it is giving great offence to ſuch ſerious people, as conſider the matter in its true light.

You may thoughtleſsly ſuppoſe, theſe light exclamations of no conſequence. But *your* conceptions of their innocence will not make them innocent. God Almighty has given you a rule.

Thou

Thou ſhalt not take the name of God in vain: and if theſe light invocations ſhould be tranſgreſſions of that rule, (and it will be very difficult for you to range them under any other head,) conſider what follows—*God will not hold you guiltleſs*—Never, therefore, ſuffer theſe light exclamations to come again out of your mouth. Leave them off—leave them off. They may *hereafter* appear againſt you—they cannot *here* anſwer any end.

LV.

ACTS, iv. 32.

AND THEY WERE OF ONE HEART AND ONE SOUL.

THE New Teſtament was compoſed by eight perſons—Matthew—Mark—Luke—John—Paul—Peter—James—and Jude. All theſe perſons wrote at different times, and in different places. Their writings conſiſt of various ſubjects—of hiſtorical narratives—of accounts of the early eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian church—of explanations of the religion they taught—and of the ſeveral rules it inculcated. And yet, notwithſtanding they all treat, more or leſs, on the ſame ſubjects, and under ſuch a variety of circumſtances, yet both in the hiſtorical and doctrinal parts, they all agree ſo faithfully, as to conſtitute one hiſtory,

and

and one ſyſtem of religion. What little variations we find among them, are of no conſequence in themſelves, but of great conſequence in proving the authenticity of the whole. They plainly ſhew, the ſeveral writers did not write in concert.

If all this do not amount to a full evidence of the truth of ſcripture, I know not what can. Where ſhall we find eight perſons coming forward from different places, and at different times, uniting ſo circumſtantially in a falſhood? Falſhood always falters, and is continually ſhifting its ground, and labouring to make out a conſiſtent ſtory. One lying witneſs, on being cloſely queſtioned in many particulars, can hardly eſcape detection. But when eight lying witneſſes are examined ſeparately on the ſeveral pretended facts of a falſhood, it is impoſſible they ſhould all agree.

LVI.

JAMES, ii. 23.

HE WAS CALLED THE FRIEND OF GOD.

THIS was ſpoken of Abraham. But as we all may have the ſame acceſs to God which Abraham had, we may all, in a degree, be, as he was, the friends of God—or rather (to expreſs ourſelves in more modeſt language,) we may hope to make God our friend. If we can fix this hope on good grounds in our minds, we want nothing more to ſecure our happineſs, both in this world and the next. The friendſhip and protection of an Almighty God are ſo great, that every thing in the world muſt appear as nothing in the compariſon.

Are our circumſtances ſtraitened? He who has a reverſion of infinite value in view, cannot, or ought not, to be much depreſſed on the trifling circumſtances of a journey to receive it.

Are

Are we ſick, or perhaps approaching our latter end?—But ſhould not we be cheered on arriving at the very threſhold of our Friend's door? Let us not then think of the ſtorm without; but of the kind reception and comfort we ſhall receive within.

Are our ſervices leſs requited than we think they ſhould be?—Let us think the more of that potent Friend, who will not ſuffer the leaſt of our good actions to paſs unrewarded.

Or do we think ourſelves neglected by our friends, and leſs reſpected in general than we hoped to have been?—Alas! let not our minds run on ſuch trifles. Have we the conſolation to think our great Friend looks favourably upon us? Then let us turn round with complacency, and ſmile at the neglect of the world.

Thus too, when we have received an injury—when our characters have been maligned—or when we have met with ingratitude from thoſe we have aſſiſted—let us recollect we have a Friend, to whom we may bring all our complaints, and who will, in due time, redreſs all our patient ſufferings.—It may, therefore, be our conſtant conſolation, on every occaſion, *If God be with us, what matters it who is againſt us!*

LVII.

GAL i. 16.

I CONFERRED NOT WITH FLESH AND BLOOD.

THE apoſtle particularly means, that he held no conference with fleſh and blood in religious matters. He attended only to the revelation of God. And indeed it is in religious matters in which fleſh and blood are chiefly the moſt miſerable adviſers. But they are vile counſellors on all ſubjects, as well as in religion. There are very few actions of our lives which they do not, in ſome degree govern, and, in general, miſlead. With all the pleaſures of the world they go hand in hand. They eaſily ſilence the voice of temperance; and if not ſeverely checked, ſoon lead us into ſenſuality. A man under the influence of fleſh and blood, is, in fact, a brute.

In

In all ambitious views, they are alſo our great ſeducers. That humble mind, which is ſatisfied with the ſtation in life appointed by God, and looks for nothing in this world but to paſs religiouſly through it, is ſoon corrupted by a conference with theſe inſinuating inſtructors. The goſpel may tell us, that he who humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted; but ſuch goſpel rules agree ill with the importunities of fleſh and blood. Exaltation alone is their purſuit.

All our domeſtic habits alſo and duties they pervade. Indolence, inactivity, and inattention to the proper buſineſs of life, are only conferences with fleſh and blood, which are continually diſplaying the happineſs of ſloth and indulgence.

N. B. Thoughts of this kind might be formed into a ſermon, under two or three proper heads. Such as an explanation of the apoſtle's meaning more at large—the great miſchief of conferring with fleſh and blood in various inſtances—and, laſtly, a few rules might be laid down to regulate the proper interference of fleſh and blood.

LVIII.

FIRST COMMANDMENT.

THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BUT ONE.

MAN is naturally a helpleſs creature. Unfurniſhed in himſelf for happineſs, he is continually ſeeking it abroad. As his ſearch however is commonly ill-directed, it is generally made in vain.—In religious matters, the ſearch of nature, before it was guided by Chriſtianity, was truly deplorable. As man acknowledged his own helpleſs condition, he acknowledged alſo the want of ſome ſuperior aſſiſtance. But as he had little acquaintance with ought but worldly things, he generally ſought his protector among viſible objects. He ranſacked the heavens above, and the earth beneath, for objects of worſhip. So infatuated was he, that he had recourſe even to the works of his own hands.—Such was the ſource of idolatry.

But

But now, my brethren, you muſt not think, idolatry is confined merely to the worſhip of idols. St. Paul gives us a more enlarged idea of it, and tells us, that *covetouſneſs, or a love of money, is idolatry.*

On this ground, every thing may lead to idolatry, in which we put that truſt for happineſs, which we ſhould repoſe ſolely in God. Thus, the ambitious man, who places all his dependence for happineſs in the attainment of power, is in fact an idolater. He removes his confidence in God to another object.—Thus pleaſure may lead us into idolatry—or, in fact, every worldly object, which we ſubſtitute as the ground of our dependence, in the room of the great Creator.

On apoſtolic authority, therefore, as we enlarge the bounds of the commandment, we may eaſily know how far we may be guilty of tranſgreſſing it. We have only to aſk our hearts, what we truſt in for happineſs? And we ſhall perhaps find, that although we call ourſelves Chriſtians, we muſt not lay idolatry entirely to the charge of heathen nations, but may probably find that we alſo are idolaters ourſelves.—

Let

Let every one of us, therefore, put away the *idolatry of his heart*—whatever it is. In the heart the idol is enthroned and worſhipped.—Let us then reject every ſpecies of idolatry, make our hearts temples of the Holy Ghoſt, and put our truſt only in the *God of our ſalvation.*

END OF THE HINTS.

A CREED.

I BELIEVE in *God*, the Creator and Preſerver of all things—infinite in power—wiſdom—juſtice mercy, and goodneſs—the diſpoſer of all events, and the great ſource of every thing we enjoy here, or hope for hereafter.

I believe in *Jeſus Chriſt* the ſon of God, and Saviour of the world—in the hiſtory of his life, contained in the ſcriptures—in the atonement he made by his death for ſin, on the conditions of faith and obedience—in his reſurrection from the dead, which aſſures us of a future life—in his mediation, at the right hand of God, which carries all our petitions to his throne—and in his finally coming to judge the world.

I believe alſo in the *holy ſpirit* of God—in its influencing the prophets of the Old Teſtament, and the writers of the New—and in its aſſiſting all well-diſpoſed Chriſtians in the conſcientious DISCHARGE OF A GOOD LIFE.

N. B. When we pray to *God* indefinitely, we mean the awful word to include the three powers of the Trinity.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE author cannot cloſe theſe three volumes without an apology for introducing the ſame ſubject ſometimes in different diſcourſes. Topics of the firſt importance in religion—as the evidences of Chriſtianity—miracles—prophecies—the atonement of Chriſt—faith and works—the promiſes and threatenings of the goſpel, &c. the author took frequent occaſion to inculcate from the pulpit. Theſe topics, therefore, naturally, more or leſs, fall in with the ſubjects of different diſcourſes. The author however believes, that although the ſame ſubject may be introduced, a different light is generally thrown upon it.—In the Hints likewiſe, two or three may be taken from the ſame text, but the ſubject is always treated under a different view.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page	*Line*	
26,	3,	*for* your thoughts, *read* the thoughts
32,	2,	*for* heart, and life, *r.* hearts and lives,
58,	3,	*for* turn riches, *r.* turns riches
101,	11,	*for* neighbour, *r.* neighbours
171,	3,	*for* received it, acquieſced in it?
260,	22,	*for* with; man *r.* with man,
272,	3,	*for* conſider next theſe, *r.* conſider next thoſe
276,	4,	*for* chief prieſt, *r.* chief prieſts
284,	24,	*for* father *r.* farther
306,	1,	*for* A he found *r.* As he found
307,	10,	*for* walk *r.* walks
315,	12,	*for* the of oppoſer, *r.* the oppoſer of
323,	2,	*for* ſingle fraud. *r.* ſimple fraud.
329,	6,	*for* infallible *r.* infallibly
417,	13,	*for* truſt in them. *r.* truſt in it.

This Note was omitted in its proper place, p. 255.

Some people object to any idea of a *covenant with God.* But it ſeems to be a mere ſtrife of words. Conditions are certainly offered by our Almighty Father to all Chriſtians, and conditions are required from them. This reciprocation may innocently, I think, be called a *covenant.* No good Chriſtian can ſuppoſe it means to detract from God's free grace—or that we ſet up any claim of merit to balance on our ſide—or that man has any leading part in making a *covenant* with God. All theſe are very offenſive ideas. But, conſidering the aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion, which attended every part of the redemption of mankind, the idea of *a covenant* is ſurely not in the leaſt out of character with every part of that amazing plan.

As to the critical meaning of the word διαθηκη, it might perhaps be rendered more literſay, than by the word *covenant*: but the tranſlators of the New Teſtament, who were good ſcholars, and, I believe, good divines, could find no better word to expreſs its meaning. See Gal. iii. 17: and Hebrews *paſſim.*

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